

Attachment “C”

June 6th

April 6, 2011

Mr. Mark Strong
National President
National League of Postmasters
of the United States
One Beltway Center
5904 Richmond Highway, Suite 500
Alexandria, VA 22303-1864

Dear Mr. Strong:

The Postal Service proposes revision of certain provisions of Title 39, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 241 (also referred to in this correspondence as "the proposed rule"), as well as *Administrative Support Manual* (ASM) Section 122.1, *Employee and Labor Relations Manual* (ELM) Section 113.3, and *Postal Operations Manual* (POM) Sections 139.116, 151.22 and 665. The Postal Service also proposes revision of Handbook PO-101, *Post Office Discontinuance Guide*. Copies of the proposed revisions, with proposed changes indicated, and with proposed revisions incorporated are enclosed for your review. Further, pertinent proposed revisions of Handbook PO-101 are highlighted in the enclosure regarding that handbook. The following summarizes the proposed changes:

- **Staffing of Post Offices:** The proposed rule would clarify that Post Offices may be managed by Postmasters, as is commonly the case, or by other personnel acting under the supervision of a Postmaster. Thus, a Postmaster could serve in more than one Post Office, or an employee other than a Postmaster could be responsible for day-to-day management of a Post Office. Such a staffing change would not necessarily result in a reclassification of the Post Office as a station or branch. This change would be reflected in ASM 122.1, ELM 113.3, and Sections 112.1 and 623 of Handbook PO-101, as well as 39 C.F.R. Part 241. The revisions to POM 139.116, 151.22, and 665 would accommodate this change, although they also clarify current practice that Postmasters need not personally perform the tasks described therein. Other provisions of Handbook PO-101 would refer to a "Postmaster or other responsible personnel" (or similar phrases) accordingly.
- **Redefinition of "Consolidation":** Under the proposed rule and revised Handbook PO-101, the conversion of a Post Office into a subordinate classified station or branch would no longer be subject to the notice and comment procedures applied to Post Office closings. The term "consolidation" would only apply when a Postal Service-operated retail facility is converted to a contractor-operated unit. This would be consistent with the extension of Post Office discontinuance procedures to classified stations and branches, as described below: the public notice-and-comment process would be triggered on the basis of an actual change in retail presence and services, rather than a change in administrative designation.

Pursuant to Title 39, U.S. Code, Section 1004(d), you may provide your written recommendations concerning the proposed revisions within 60 days of your receipt of this correspondence.

Additionally, as a matter of general interest, the Postal Service plans to make other changes to 39 C.F.R. Part 241 and Handbook PO-101, beyond the scope of those subject to the consultative process under Title 39, U.S. Code, Section 1004(b) and (d). If you wish to provide input on these changes, the Postal Service would welcome your views within the 30-day public comment period for the proposed rule. The following summarizes these other changes:

- **Stations/Branches Closings:** Postal Service regulations have not subjected classified stations and branches to the same notice and comment procedures as are applied to Post Office closings and consolidations. The Postal Service recognizes the Postal Regulatory Commission and others have urged the Postal Service in multiple contexts to apply the same procedures to all such facilities. The proposed rule and revised Handbook PO-101 would do just that, by applying the same notice and comment procedures to classified stations and branches as are applied to Post Offices.
- **Top-Down Process:** The Postal Service generally uses a "bottom-up" process to identify Post Offices for possible discontinuance. The proposed rule and revised Handbook PO-101 would clarify that Headquarters management could identify candidate offices for study using a "top-down" approach.
- **Factors to Trigger a Discontinuance Study:** The proposed rule and revised Handbook PO-101 would clarify factors that could be used to identify candidate retail facilities for discontinuance study consistent with applicable law. The proposed factors would include a decline in earned workload below the minimum established level for the lowest non-bargaining (EAS) employee grade. Insufficient customer demand would also be a factor that could lead to a feasibility study, as would the availability of alternate access channels.
- **Process Management:** The proposed rule and revised Handbook PO-101 give effect to improvements in the administration and management of the discontinuance process.

Please contact Lee Olohan at (202) 268-4762 if you have questions concerning this matter.

Sincerely,


John Cavallo
Assistant Manager
Labor Relations Policy Administration

Enclosures

Post Office Postal Service-Operated Retail Facilities Discontinuance Guide

Handbook PO-101

~~August 2004~~ May 2011

Transmittal Letter

- A. Introduction.** Handbook PO 101, Post Office Postal Service-Operated Retail Facilities Discontinuance Guide, serves as a tool for providing district ~~Post Office~~ Discontinuance Coordinators information on policies and procedures related to affecting investigation of the possible discontinuance of Post Offices Postal Service-operated retail facilities. Through adherence to these policies and procedures ~~this handbook~~, the Postal Service™ will assess the viability of and customer access to ~~Post Offices~~ retail facilities, ensuring that the Postal Service continues to provide ~~cost~~ cost effective universal service to all Americans as outlined in its ~~Letter to the Nation~~ Plan of April 2002.
- B. Explanation.** This handbook outlines the procedures ~~to follow in~~ applicable to the Post Office discontinuance process and emphasizes customer participation in these proceedings. ~~There is no such investigations. No change in law or Postal Service policy governing discontinuance of Post Offices has occurred, except that, as policy decision, the Postal Service now applies the notice and comment procedures for Post Office discontinuance investigations also to discontinuance of Classified Stations and Classified Branches. The purpose of the guide~~ this handbook is neither to encourage nor discourage discontinuance, but rather simply to provide assistance to explain how best field personnel can undertake the investigative process.
- C. Distribution.** This handbook is distributed to all appropriate ~~headquarter~~ Headquarters, area, district and local Post Office employees who are involved in the discontinuance process.
- **Online.** Handbook PO-101 is available on the Postal Service Intranet on the PolicyNet Web site at <http://blue.usps.gov/cpim> (click on HBKs).
 - **Additional Copies.** You may order printed copies from the Material Distribution Center (MDC) using the touch tone order entry (TTOE) system. Call 800-332-0317, option 2.
- Note: You must be registered to use TTOE. To register, call 800-332-0317, option 1, extension 2925, and follow the prompts to leave a message. Then, wait 48 hours after registering before you place your first order.
- D. Revisions.** We will issue any new or revised policies or procedures through *Postal Bulletin* articles.
- E. Rescissions.** Any previous applicable directive that is in conflict with this handbook is rescinded. The previous issue of Handbook PO-101 is obsolete.
- F. Comments.** Submit comments and questions about the content of this handbook in writing to:
- MANAGER
STAFF CUSTOMER SERVICE OPERATIONS
DELIVERY AND RETAIL POST OFFICE OPERATIONS
US POSTAL SERVICE
475 L'ENFANT PLAZA SW ROOM 500 ROOM 6800
WASHINGTON DC 20260 800-7-6800
- G. Effective Date.** This handbook is effective upon receipt.



William P. Calligan
Acting

Insert Signature

Dean J Granholm

Vice President

Delivery and Retail Post Office Operations

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1 Introduction

11 Overview

111 Purpose

This guidehandbook is designed to assist field discontinuance personnel in undertaking a feasibility study, an investigation that may lead to the discontinuance of a Postal Service-operated retail facility that could be a Post Office^{LM} discontinuance process,TM, Classified Station, or Classified Branch.

112 Scope

112.1 General

These guidelines apply primarily to the discontinuance of independent Post Offices. Chapters 2 through 5 are organized according to the steps in that process. Special considerations are covered in chapter 6. Separate procedures for discontinuing classified stations, branches, and contractor-operated community Post Offices (CPOs) are in chapter 7. Regulations affecting "Expansion, Relocation, and Construction of New Post Offices" are found in 39 CFR 241.4.

112.2 Exhibits and Forms

Forms, letters, and questionnaires in this guide may be photocopied or reproduced as necessary. Postal Service's consideration of whether an existing USPS-operated Post Office closing standard language (POC'SL) templates are also available for ACF workstations of employees who have requested delivery of the POC'SL templates. Once the templates have been installed, you can access them on the ACF workstation by starting Microsoft Word. For further information on POC'SL templates, please contact the Headquarters Post Office review coordinator. However, the *Postal Bulletin Post Office Change Announcement* form is provided as information only (see section 431.33). Original *Postal Bulletin Post Office Change Announcement* forms are transmitted to the district manager, Customer Service, and Sales, with the final determination from Headquarters. A copy of the final determination is transmitted to the vice-president, Area Operations. Classified Station, or Classified Branch should be discontinued. This includes any study, proposal, or final determination to:

- replace a Postal Service-operated retail facility with a contractor-operated retail facility;
- combine one or more Postal Service-operated retail facilities; or
- discontinue a Postal Service-operated retail facility without providing a replacement facility.

The conversion of a Post Office into, or the replacement of a Post Office with, a Classified Station or Classified Branch is not a discontinuance action subject to this Handbook. A change in the management of a Post Office such that it is staffed only part-time by a postmaster, or not staffed at all by a postmaster but instead by another type of USPS employee, is not a discontinuance action subject to this section.

112.2 References

See appendix CB for a list of document references on the discontinuance process. This list is a guide to further resources. For information or assistance on station and branch discontinuances, contact the district Post Office review coordinator.

12 Federal Law Regarding Post Office Discontinuances**121 Independent Post Offices**

Under Title 39, *United States Code*, Section 404(b)(d), any decision to close or consolidate a Post Office must be based on certain criteria. These include the effect on the community served; the effect on employees of the Post Office; compliance with government policy established by law that the Postal Service™ must provide a maximum degree of effective and regular postal services to rural areas, communities, and small towns where Post Offices are not self-sustaining; the economic savings to the Postal Service; and any other factors the Postal Service determines necessary. By means of a 1998 amendment, the Postal Service may not consider Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) compliance when deciding whether to close a Post Office. In addition, certain mandatory procedures apply to discontinuance actions:

- a. The public must be given 60 days' notice of the Postal Service's intention to close or consolidate a Post Office at least 60 days prior to the proposed action effective date of the closure or consolidation, to enable the persons served by a Post Office to evaluate the proposal and provide comments. As a matter of policy, the Postal Service extends this requirement to discontinuance actions of USPS-operated Classified Stations and Classified Branches.
- b. Final The final determination to close or consolidate a Post Office must be made in writing and must include findings covering all the required considerations after public comments are received and taken into account. As a matter of policy, the Postal Service extends this requirement to discontinuance actions of USPS-operated Classified Stations and Classified Branches.
- c. Written The written determination must be made available to the customers served by the office at least 60 days before the discontinuance takes effect. As a matter of policy, the Postal Service extends this requirement to discontinuance actions of USPS-operated Classified Stations and Classified Branches.
- d. Any customer served by the an affected Post Office may appeal the decision to the Postal Rate Regulatory Commission (PRC) within the first 30 days after the written determination is made available.
- e. The PRC may either affirm the determination of the Postal Service or return the matter for further consideration, but may not modify the determination.
- f. The PRC is required by title 39, *United States Code*, section 404(b)(5) to make a determination on resolve the appeal no later than 120 days after receiving the appeal.

122 Classified Stations, and Branches, and Contractor Operated Community Post Offices

When a district manager, Customer Service and Sales, determines it is necessary to discontinue the operation of a classified station, branch, or contractor-operated community Post Office (CPO) that is attached administratively to an independent Post Office, written notice must be provided immediately to the vice president, Delivery and Retail. The notice must include the reasons for the proposed discontinuance. The vice president or designee approves or disapproves the proposed discontinuance based on the justification provided by the district manager, Customer Service and Sales. No final action on a proposed discontinuance may be taken without the vice president's approval.

As a matter of policy, the Postal Service applies certain provisions of this Handbook to discontinuance actions associated with USPS-operated Classified Stations and Classified Branches.

13 Responsibilities

131 Vice President, Delivery and Retail Post Office Operations

The vice president Vice President, Delivery and Retail Post Office Operations (or designee), makes final determinations to discontinue independent Post Offices, classified stations, branches, and contract community Post Offices.

~~132 District Manager, Customer Service and Sales~~

~~132.1 General~~

~~The district manager, Customer Service and Sales, is responsible for overseeing the Post Office discontinuance investigations within the district and must provide written approval before any investigation is initiated. Post Office and community Post Office discontinuance activities are generally initiated by the manager, Post Office Operations. Classified station and branch discontinuance proposals are generally initiated by the installation head. The district manager, Customer Service and Sales, must immediately notify the Headquarters Post Office review coordinator when an action contrary to a discontinuance proposal occurs after a proposal is sent to the vice president, Delivery and Retail for review. Such contrary actions may warrant withdrawal of the proposal by the district manager, Customer Service and Sales. Examples of contrary actions include the following: Stations, and Classified Branches. In addition, the Vice President, Delivery and Post Office Operations, may provide authorization to study a retail facility for possible discontinuance.~~

- ~~a. — Soliciting contract offer.~~
- ~~b. — Failing to get interested offerors for a community Post Office proposal.~~
- ~~c. — Filling the postmaster position.~~
- ~~d. — Making significant building modifications.~~
- ~~e. — Renewing lease.~~
- ~~f. — Proposing change in alternate service.~~
- ~~g. — Changing Post Office level and hours of operation.~~

~~132.2 Coordinator Reassignments~~

~~The district manager, Customer Service and Sales, is responsible for ensuring that the Headquarters Post Office review coordinator is notified immediately, in writing, of any district Post Office review coordinator reassignments. This notification must include the name, address, and telephone numbers of all newly assigned coordinators. This information is entered into the Headquarters directory of Post Office review coordinators. Current information in this directory is important for the efficient review and conclusion of discontinuance proposals, the timely response by Government Relations and Public Policy to congressional inquiries, and the provision of assistance and instructions to field personnel.~~

~~133~~ District Post Office Review Coordinator

~~133.1~~ Responsibilities

132 ~~The district Post Office review coordinator provides assistance and support to subordinate investigative coordinators throughout the discontinuance process. The district Post Office review coordinator~~ District Manager

The District Manager is responsible for overseeing the Post Office discontinuance feasibility studies within a district and provides approval before any such studies are initiated, unless approval has already been furnished by the Vice President, Delivery and Post Office Operations. Upon approval to study a Post Office, Classified Station, or Classified Branch for possible discontinuance, the District Manager may establish a District Review Team.

The District Manager must ensure that the Vice President, Area Operations, is notified of all discontinuance actions involving a Post Office, Classified Station, or Classified Branch.

In addition, the District Manager is responsible for reviewing the results of the feasibility study prior to providing approval/disapproval to post a formal proposal. Finally, the District Manager reviews the revised proposal for accuracy and completeness prior to its submission to the Vice President, Delivery and Post Office Operations, for review and final determination.

133 District Review Team

If established, the District Review Team usually includes the functional organizations listed in 133.1 at the district level. Each of these functional organizations plays a critical role in the discontinuance process. These functional organizations within the district are responsible for the development and coordination of any data collection, communications, analysis, or other action necessary to support a discontinuance study under their functional responsibility.

133.1 Designated Team Members

- a. Facility Service Office: Facility and lease data.
- b. Manager, Post Office Operations (MPOO): Operational data and impacts.
- c. Manager, Operations Programs Support: Delivery data and alternate delivery options.
- d. Manager, Finance: Development and coordination of financial data.
- e. Postmaster (for discontinuance of Post Offices, Classified Stations, or Classified Branches): Local knowledge.
- f. Discontinuance Coordinator: The Discontinuance Coordinator provides assistance and support to the District Review Team throughout the discontinuance process. The Discontinuance Coordinator is responsible for thoroughly reviewing official records and certifying their accuracy and compliance with federal law, Postal Service policy, and the instructions in this guide. District Post Office review coordinators are also responsible for training incumbent and newly assigned subordinate investigative coordinators, disseminating information, and maintaining open lines of communication by providing regular, effective assistance and guidance to subordinate coordinators and investigative personnel. handbook.

133.2 Qualifications

~~The employee appointed by the district manager, Customer Service and Sales, to serve as the district Post Office review coordinator should have extensive Post Office discontinuance and field operations experience, as well as good oral and written communication skills. If the district Post Office review coordinator has no such experience, consideration should be given to reassigning the coordination responsibilities to a more experienced employee. If a more knowledgeable employee is not available, the inexperienced coordinator must begin training immediately under the guidance of experienced personnel at the district or other location where~~

adequate training is available. If adequate training is not available in the district, ask an experienced coordinator from another district to provide assistance. Requests for Headquarters hosted-field training must be made in writing to the vice president, Delivery and Retail, by the district manager, Customer Service and Sales.

~~133.3~~ **Official Correspondence**

~~133.3.1~~ **Headquarters**

District Post Office review coordinators must instruct all subordinate investigative coordinators that no correspondence may be sent to Headquarters without the name, title, and telephone number of the employee most familiar with the subject of the correspondence. This includes the transmittal of proposals to Government Relations and Public Policy at Headquarters. ~~Exhibit 133.21 shows the address and telephone number for Government Relations and Public Policy. Except for emergency suspension information (closing, service restoration, and 90-day plan of action notices), correspondence may be faxed to Headquarters only with prior authorization. Do not transmit lengthy information. All fax transmissions must include the originating fax number and location, along with the other required information.~~

~~133.3.2~~ **Area Offices Notification**

District Post Office review coordinators must make sure that the vice president, Area Operations, is notified of Post Office discontinuances.

~~133.4~~ **Proposal Checklist**

When a proposed discontinuance reaches the stage where a proposal to close or consolidate a Post Office is prepared for posting, the district Post Office review coordinator must thoroughly review the proposal before the 60-day posting period. District Post Office review coordinators must sign a proposal checklist to certify that they have conducted the review and that all necessary activities have been performed. The district Post Office review coordinator must mail a copy of the proposal, along with a complete and current PS Form 4970, *Post Office Closure or Consolidation – Proposal Fact Sheet*, to the senior vice president, Government Relations and Public Policy, at Headquarters 10 days before posting the proposal (see sections 341.1 and 341.2).

~~133.5~~ **Log of Post Office Discontinuance Actions**

The district Post Office review coordinator must maintain a log of Post Office discontinuance actions for each Post Office in the district that is under investigation for possible discontinuance (see part 422). The log must include the name, title, and telephone number of the coordinator most familiar with the case. It must be current and available at all times. This log assists the coordinator when responding to questions from Government Relations and Public Policy at Headquarters regarding congressional inquiries. The log of Post Office discontinuance actions should be readily available to personnel who handle inquiries in the absence of the coordinator. A copy of the log must be included in the official record submitted to the vice president, Delivery and Retail.

~~133.6~~ **Official Record**

~~133.6.1~~ **Reviewing Official Record**

Before transmitting the official record to Headquarters, the district Post Office review coordinator must thoroughly review the record to make sure that there are no inconsistencies, errors, or omissions. It may be necessary to return the record to the investigative coordinator for additional clarification, correction of deficiencies, or the reposting of an incorrectly posted proposal. An updated PS Form 4970 may be needed to ensure that information is current. The district Post Office review coordinator must sign and enter into the record the log of Post Office discontinuance actions to certify that the record is ready for the vice president, Delivery and Retail, to review and, in the event of an appeal, appropriate for review by the general counsel at Headquarters and the Postal Rate Commission. See part 422 for information about the log of Post Office discontinuance actions.

133.62 Maintaining Official Record

The official record containing *original* documents is kept at the district level. The district Post Office review coordinator is responsible for updating this original official record from the time it arrives at the district until the end of the discontinuance process. The final entry to the record is the *Postal Bulletin Post Office Changes* announcement. The original official record is filed at district archives. Other copies of the record may be destroyed at the discretion of the district manager, Customer Service and Sales.

133.63 Archiving Official Record**133.631 Preparing to Archive Record**

Before permanently closing the record to be filed at district archives, the district Post Office review coordinator must review the record documentation from the time the record was transmitted to Headquarters for final determination to ensure that all final phases of the process are documented chronologically. (Documents filed in the official record must be entered chronologically.) Examples of required documents include:

- a. Final determination postings.
- b. Copy of the completed *Postal Bulletin Post Office Change Announcement* form.
- c. Appeal notices and decision (when appropriate).
- d. Copy of the instructions to the local address management office to update the AMS (Address Management System) report.
- e. Copy of the published *Postal Bulletin Post Office Changes* announcement.

133.632 Archiving Record

In accordance with Handbook AS305, *Records Control*, the complete archived record must be kept at the district office for two years from the end of the calendar year in which the final decision is made. The record may be disposed of after that time at the discretion of the district manager, Customer Service and Sales. Copies of the log of Post Office discontinuance actions (see section Log of Post Office Discontinuance Actions) must be kept at the district office for 20 years from the end of the calendar year in which the final decision is made.

134 Investigative Coordinator**134.1 Responsibilities**

The investigative coordinator is responsible for:

- a. Collecting and analyzing data on discontinuance investigations.
 - g. Manager, Marketing: Responsible for customer data and coordination of community meetings, retail and expanded access, permit mailers and data related to permit mailing options; responsible for coordinating and responding to all customer inquiries and concerns.
 - h. Corporate Communications: Responsible for communication to media and employees.
 - i. Human Resources: Labor issues and communications to employee and management organizations.
 - j. Government Relations at Postal Headquarters and District Congressional liaison contact: Congressional, state, and local government involvement.

133.2 Discontinuance Coordinator

Discontinuance Coordinator has administrative and coordination responsibilities for the discontinuance activities, including:

- a. Coordinating and analyzing data collected to investigate possible discontinuance with appropriate district stakeholders.
- b. Making recommendations to the district Post Office review coordinator/District Manager based on this analysis/analytical results.

c. **Compiling the official record of documentation.**

d. **Ensuring that the discontinuance investigation is conducted in compliance complies with federal law, Postal Service policy, and the instructions set forth in this guide handbook.**

134.2 Investigation

The investigative coordinator should obtain and analyze data in an accurate, thorough, and objective manner, solicit the views of customers, and address their concerns. A thorough initial investigation avoids misunderstandings, problems, and possible appeals later in the Ensuring process. Analysis and decision-making may occur throughout the process, and a decision may be made at any time to stop the discontinuance investigation.

134.3 Memorandum to the Record

If at any time discrepancies or inconsistencies appear in the record documentation, the investigative coordinator should explain them by writing a memorandum to the record. The investigative coordinator must sign and date the memorandum on the day the information is obtained and entered into the official file record.

134.4 Proposal Checklist

Before the 60-day posting period, the investigative coordinator must send the proposal, PS Form 4920, and the proposal checklist to the district Post Office review coordinator for review. No posting is to be made before this review is complete and the district Post Office review coordinator notifies Government Relations and Public Policy at Headquarters.

134.5 Communication With District Post Office Review Coordinator

The investigative coordinator must keep the district Post Office review coordinator informed of the progress of each discontinuance case. This communication is necessary to maintain current information in the log of Post Office discontinuance actions and to facilitate efficient response to congressional and other inquiries received at the district level.

134.6 Official Administrative Record

134.61 Description

The official record includes all information that the district manager, Customer Service and Sales, has considered, and the decision must stand on the record. No information or views submitted by customers may be excluded, whether they support the proposal or not. The discontinuance process can be lengthy, and more than one coordinator may be involved in the investigation. The official record must be updated and maintained in an accurate and timely manner to assist new coordinators and others who need to review the documentation in the record.

134.62 Format

The record must be maintained in the following format:

- a. The record is assigned a docket number, which is the ZIP Code^{1M} for the Post Office under study for discontinuance.
- b. The sequential number assigned to each document becomes the item number. The docket number and item number steps are placed in the upper right corner of each document when entered into the record.
- c. A numeric rather than alphabetical numbering system is used. Page numbers can be assigned consecutively throughout the document or consecutively within each item. Page numbers should be placed in the upper right corner of each document below the docket and item number.
- d. The items are filed in chronological order.
- e. A chronological index is included that identifies each document by item number and the date entered in the record. See Exhibit 134.62e for a sample index.

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- f. The entire record is bound in a folder that opens from the side. A label bearing the Post Office name and docket number is displayed on the folder cover. Threering binders and notebooks are not acceptable.

134.63 Content

These conditions apply to the content:

- a. Do not refer to customers by name in the index or proposal.
- b. Ensure that photographs in the record sent to Headquarters are originals. Digital photographs printed in color on premium paper are also acceptable.
- c. Ensure that photocopies in the record are legible, and that *both sides of two-sided documents are included*.
- d. Ensure that the record supports statements in the proposal.
- e. An updated PS Form 4920 must be **completed** to reflect current information when necessary. If an office is suspended, copy the information that has not changed and update other data on the new PS Form 4920. Keep old PS Forms 4920 in their chronological place in the record.
- f. Have the record thoroughly reviewed by coordinators to ensure it is accurate and in compliance with federal law, Postal Service policy, and the instructions in this guide.

134.64 Availability of Record to Public

A complete copy of the record must be available for public inspection during normal office hours at the affected Post Offices, beginning no later than the date when the proposal or final determination is posted and extending through the posting period. Provide copies of documents in the record on request, and collect payment of fees prescribed by *Administrative Support Manual* 352.7. Provide copies of the proposal and comment form on request without charge.

14 Common Problems in Discontinuance Process

141 Suspensions

The following must be done/accomplished:

- a. Provide sufficient valid reason to suspend.
- b. Provide sufficient documentation justifying suspension.
- c. Involve Postmaster organizations.
- d. Notify and adequately explain reason for suspension to customers.
- e. Identify most likely recommended permanent service as temporary alternate service.
- f. Conduct **timely** investigations and followup. (A plan of action should be sent to the Headquarters Post Office review coordinator through the vice president, Delivery and Retail, within 90 days after the suspension occurs.)
- g. Notify Headquarters.
- h. Conduct and document search for suitable alternate quarters.
- i. Conduct and document a search for qualified personnel.

142 Initial Investigation

The following must be accomplished:

- a. Thoroughly conduct or document Post Office and community visits.
- b. Adequately investigate alternate services.

- c. Conduct and document search for suitable alternate quarters.
- d. Provide sufficient reason or documentation to support discontinuance.
- e. Post final determination before presenting conclusion as to alternate service to customer.

143 Questionnaires

The following must be accomplished:

- a. Provide reason for discontinuance or recommended alternate service in cover letter.
- b. Provide name and telephone number of contact person in cover letter.
- c. Tailor questionnaires to the local situation and to the recommended alternate service.
- d. Send questionnaires in a timely manner.
- e. Thoroughly complete analysis. (Customer concerns should be listed and paraphrased, with the number of customers expressing each concern and the Postal Service response. Concerns should be classified as postal or nonpostal.)
- f. Adequately research and address customer comments. A response should be sent to each customer who submits a questionnaire, and the response should address specific customer concerns.

144 Community Meetings

The following must be accomplished:

- a. Conduct meetings in a timely manner.
- b. Select time and site to encourage customer participation.
- c. Give adequate notice to customers.
- d. Thoroughly record documentation and analysis of meeting.
- e. Present a full range of alternate service options, together with advantages and disadvantages.

145 Proposal

Do the following:

- a. Notify Government Relations and Public Policy at Headquarters and Area Public Affairs and Communication 10 days before the actual posting of the proposal.
- b. Clearly state reason for discontinuance in Section I of the proposal.
- c. Document the record to support the proposal.
- d. Adequately answer customer concerns from questionnaires and community meetings.
- e. Verify existence of any interested offerors when a CPO is recommended.
- f. Check for mail theft or vandalism reports with the Inspection Service or local authorities in areas with recommended rural or highway contract route.
- g. Obtain prior authorization from the vice president, Area Operations (or designee) before proposing ZIP Code elimination on a closing.
- h. Include information about petitions and congressional inquiries.
- i. Explain effect on all employees, including noncareer status.
- j. Post invitation for comments *with the proposal* for at least 60 days.
- k. Post proposal for at least 60 days (always begin the count at day zero).
- l. Post proposal in all affected offices.

- m. Round date stamp proposal and invitation for comments on date of posting and date of removal.
- n. Post proposal and invitation for comments concurrently at all affected offices.
- o. Make sure information in the proposal is consistent with PS Form 4920.
- p. Make comment forms and copies of proposal available for customers.
- q. Make official record available at all affected offices.
- r. Thoroughly record analysis of comments.
- s. Respond to customer comments.
- t. Write or prepare revised proposal with information from proposal posting and customer comments on proposal.
- u. Post notice of taking proposal and comments under internal consideration after removal of the proposal.
- v. Accurately state the number of businesses in the community (need to include small and in-home businesses operated from rural residences).
- w. Check with municipal, county, or state officials regarding community growth and population trends.
- x. Check with local or state officials on historical value of building owned or leased by the Postal Service.
- y. State distance to nearest Post Office offering permit mail acceptance.

146 **Official Record**

The following must be accomplished:

- a. District manager, Customer Service and Sales, must give written authorization to study.
- b. Inconsistencies, contradictions, and anomalies must be clarified in the record by a memorandum to the record (see section Memorandum to the Record).
- c. List docket and item numbers on each document.
- d. Enter documents in chronological order.
- e. Complete or review index for consistency with the entries.
- f. Include legible photocopies or both sides of two-sided documents.
- g. Provide original photographs or digital photographs printed in color on premium paper to Headquarters.
- h. Conduct or include in record window transaction and mail volume surveys.
- i. Provide current and complete PS Form 4920.
- j. Update documentation. (Example: The description of community omits or miscounts significant local establishments, such as schools, businesses, and churches; or, the analysis of community postal needs omits or miscounts postage meter customers or bulk mailing permits.)
- k. Conceal customer names in index or proposal.
- l. Certify record (see part 412).

District manager, Customer Service and Sales, must make transmittal to Headquarters.

2 ~~Decision to Feasibility Study and Preproposal Investigation~~

21 Decision to Study

211 **Authorization**

The first step in the Post Office investigating possible discontinuance process is an official decision to undertake a study. No discontinuance investigation feasibility study may begin without written authorization from by the district manager, Customer Service District Manager or the Vice President, Delivery and Sales, to study the Post Office for possible discontinuance. See Exhibit 211 for a sample request for authorization. Operations. The authorization must be documented and included in the official record.

Begin compilation of the official record as soon as a decision is made to initiate a discontinuance study for discontinuance.

212 ~~Insufficient Circumstances to Study for Discontinuance~~

212.1 ~~Building Modifications for the Handicapped~~

Any claim that the continued operation of a building without handicapped modifications is inconsistent with the Architectural Barriers Act only serves to show that necessary modifications must be made to satisfy these requirements or that a waiver must be received. Such a claim does not, in and of itself, constitute justification to discontinue a Post Office.

212.2 ~~Restroom Facilities~~

The absence of running water or restroom facilities may be considered in conjunction with other factors in the discontinuance investigation. However, the absence of such facilities does not, in and of itself, constitute justification to discontinue a Post Office.

212.3 ~~OSHA Requirements~~

The Postal Service may not consider compliance with Occupational Safety and Health Agency (OSHA) requirements in making a discontinuance determination.

212.4 ~~Economic Reasons~~

The Postal Service is prevented from closing a small Post Office solely for operating at a deficit.

~~213~~ 212 **Circumstances Prompting Decision to Study**

212.1 Postmaster or Other Responsible Personnel Vacancy

A postmaster vacancy in the position of postmaster or that of other responsible personnel may lead to a decision to conduct a study for evaluating the Post Office workload and the service needs of the community. However, the fact that an office is vacant does not, in and of itself, constitute justification to discontinue a Post Office.

212.2 Emergency Suspension

The cancellation of a lease or rental agreement when no suitable alternate quarters are available in the community, a fire or other natural disaster, severe health or safety hazards, a challenge to the sanctity of the mail, or similar reasons may lead to a decision to study (see chapter 6611).

212.3 Office Workload

Earned workload below the minimum established level for the lowest non-bargaining Executive and Administrative Schedule (EAS) employee grade may lead to a decision to study.

212.4 Insufficient Customer Demand

Insufficient customer demand, evidenced by declining or low volume, revenue, revenue units, local business activity, or local population trends, may lead to a decision to study.

212.5 Reasonable Alternate Access

The availability of reasonable alternate access to postal services for local customers may lead to a decision to study.

212.6 Special Circumstances

Special circumstances — such as the incorporation of two communities into one — may also warrant a decision to study. See subchapter 6: See chapter 6 or contact the Headquarters Post Office review coordinator/Review Coordinator for assistance.

213 Circumstances Insufficient to Justify a Discontinuance Study

In the absence of the factors identified in 212, the following do not constitute circumstances that justify initiation of a discontinuance study.

213.1 Building Modifications for the Handicapped

Any claim that the continued operation of a building without modification that facilitates access by handicapped persons warrants discontinuance is inconsistent with the Architectural Barriers Act (42 USC 4151 et seq.) and serves only to show that necessary modifications must be made that satisfy those requirements, or that a waiver must be received. As such, any claim of noncompliance does not, in and of itself, constitute justification to discontinue a retail facility.

213.2 Restroom Facilities

The absence of running water or restroom facilities may be considered in conjunction with other factors in the feasibility study. However, the absence of such facilities does not, in and of itself, constitute justification to discontinue a retail facility.

213.3 OSHA Requirements

The Postal Service may not consider compliance with Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 (29 USC 651 et seq.) in making a discontinuance determination.

213.4 Deficit

The Postal Service is precluded as a matter of law from discontinuing a small Post Office solely for operating at a deficit.

214 Time Frame for Plan of Action Decision Time-Frame **(Emergency Suspension)**

Within 90 days (3 months) of a relevant occurrence of an emergency suspension, a decision should be made to fill a postmaster position, secure suitable alternate quarters, take any other necessary corrective action, or initiate a preproposal investigation feasibility study.

22 Pre-proposal Investigation

221 Preparing for Investigation

Begin preparations for a preproposal investigation after receiving written authorization from the district manager, Customer Service and Sales (see Exhibit 211). To compile the preparations:

- a. Obtain maps of the area showing the proximity of the office under study to other Post Office locations.
- b. Request the postmaster or officer in charge (OIC) to compile a list of customers' addresses. Identify customers with disabilities and special provisions, as well as customers receiving duplicate delivery service. Obtain a list of the schools, churches, businesses, postage meter customers, permit mailers, and civic organizations served by the office. See Exhibit 221b for a sample letter requesting customer information from the postmaster or OIC.
- c. Obtain PS Forms 4003 and 4003A, *Official Rural Route Description and Continuation Sheet*, and a route map for rural or highway contract routes that may be able to provide alternate service.
- d. Obtain a copy of the lease from the Facilities Service Office. If the facility is inadequate, obtain a copy of a recent building inspection and a list of facility deficiencies. Also obtain photographs of the building showing any deficiencies.
- e. Consult county or city officials for information about population, area or Post Office building historical significance, and growth trends within the community. If population records are not available, use Post Office delivery statistics to show growth trends for the past several years. See Exhibit 221e for a sample letter to county officials requesting growth information.

Send a request to the 221 Notifying Customers

After the authorization to study is approved by the District Manager or the Vice President, Delivery and Post Office Operations, responsible field personnel begin to distribute initial communications to employees, customers, and other stakeholders.

222 Initiating the Study

Responsible field personnel begin preparations for a feasibility study upon receiving authorization from the Vice President, Delivery and Post Office Operations or the District Manager. The Discontinuance Coordinator should coordinate the following activities:

- a. The Manager, Consumer & Industry Contact (Dist), confirms the P.O. Box address at which the district receives customer questionnaire responses, written comments and other customer or stakeholder input.
- b. The Discontinuance Coordinator obtains a list of affected delivery addresses for the studied retail facility from the district Address Management System manager. The Discontinuance Coordinator also prepares customer notifications to each affected delivery customer (as outlined in 24).
- c. The Facilities Service Office provides current lease information, copies of recent building inspections, the facility call history, and any request to locate alternate quarters, as applicable.
- d. The Postal Inspection Service provides the listing of vandalism cases reported by the IS and the local law enforcement agency to determine and verify any reports of mail theft or vandalism in the area. Include a franked, self-addressed envelope with the request. See Exhibit 221f for a sample request for inspection service report.
- e. Consult the managers of the Post Office under study and nearby offices that may provide alternate service, and make an appointment to visit those offices. It may also be useful to meet with local leaders. Encourage Postal Service managers and the public to provide their opinions about the investigation in writing so that those opinions may be included in the official record.

If the Postal Service managers and the public do not want to do so, add a memorandum for the record stating this fact. During the visit to nearby Post Offices, meet with the carriers of the routes being considered as alternate service.

- h. ~~Send window transaction and mail volume survey forms to the postmaster or OIC or the station or branch manager of the office under study. Have the postmaster or OIC or the station or branch manager conduct a 2-week survey. See Exhibit 221h for a sample request to conduct surveys letter to the postmaster or OIC and sample survey forms.~~

Note: If the office is utilizing POS ONE equipment, print the window operation survey report each day during the 2-week time period to obtain the average number of transactions by type. For offices utilizing IRT equipment, the IRT item count report should be printed each day during the 2-week period.

- i. ~~Complete as much of PS Form 4920 as possible (see Exhibit 221i).~~

- e. The Manager, Finance, coordinates the collection of financial data.
- f. The Manager, Post Office Operations (MPOO), has responsibility for the completion of Form 4920, *Discontinuance Feasibility Study Survey*, and Form 150, *Postmaster Workload Information*, or *Station Manager WSC*. The MPOO is responsible for obtaining records of Form 25, *Trust Fund Account*, and Form 3609, *Record of Permit Imprint Mailings*, if applicable. The MPOO also has responsibility for determining the employee impact.
- g. The district Bulk Mail Entry Unit (BMEU) provides a listing of permit mailers from the *PostalOne!* system. Additionally, the district BMEU should identify any drop shipment customers that may be impacted by discontinuance.
- h. The Manager, Operations Programs Support (MOPS), provides delivery growth rates and begins investigating alternate delivery options, in accordance with procedures established by Headquarters.
- i. The Manager, Marketing, provides a map of the area showing the proximity of the installation under study to other installations and to expanded access points. The Manager, Marketing, also begins investigating alternate retail options, in accordance with procedures established by Headquarters.

223 Conducting an Onsite-Site Investigation

Visit the community and affected Post Offices to learn firsthand the operations, workload, local service needs, and community geography and economy. While onsite do the following:

~~Photograph~~ The following should be performed by the Discontinuance Coordinator or by local employees acting under the direction of the Discontinuance Coordinator:

- a. Using a digital camera, photograph the interior and exterior of the Post Office retail facility. Photograph any structural defects, safety hazards, and security deficiencies, and place the originals in the Headquarters copy of the official record. Take careful notes on the condition of the building. Request a building inspection from the Facilities Service Office or Administrative Services Office, when appropriate. If there are defects and a current inspection is not received from the Facilities Service Office (FSO), request a building inspection from the FSO. Take or download photographs of the community, such as views of the community facing north, south, east, and west of the Post Office installation. Photograph or download digital photographs of any potential alternate quarters, community Post Office potential contractor sites, or nonpersonnel rural unit sites.
- b. Explain Post Office discontinuance regulations to the postmaster, Postmaster, OIC, or OIC or to the classified or station branch manager or other staff responsible for the affected Post Office retail facility. Explain the discontinuance process and how to handle customer inquiries. Make it clear that no final decision has been made at this point in the investigation.

~~Complete a PS Form 150, *Postmaster Workload Information* (see Exhibit 222c). Exhibit 222e also shows the workload service credit ranges and fiscal year revenue unit values. Current workload service credit ranges and worksheets are available for download from the Intranet at <http://blue.usps.gov/hrispr-cr>. Determine the current executive and administrative schedule (EAS) grade and service hour category of the office by completing the *Worksheet for Calculating Workload Service Credit for Post Offices* in Exhibit 222e. If the PS Form 150 indicates that the Post Office evaluation has changed, an adjustment in the EAS level and service hour category is required. The PS Form 150 must be coordinated with human resources, since that office is responsible for changes to authorized postmaster grades and postmaster compensation for Post Offices within the district that are covered~~

by the Workload Service Credit System. Evaluate whether any changes can be recommended to the postmaster (PO) to improve the efficiency of the office. *Example:* Should the intermediate rural route be moved to the emanating office? Should a Highway Contract Route (HCR) trip be eliminated by having mail dropped off by locked pouch by a rural carrier? Any proposed changes should include updated PS Forms 150 for the affected Post Offices to show the impact, if any, on currently authorized postmaster grades. For assistance in completing the PS Form 150, contact compensation and staffing personnel in the district.

Contact or visit retail establishments to determine whether potential interest exists for a contractor-operated retail facility (see 232.3).

- d. Review the town map and carrier's line of travel, where appropriate. Measure the distance of the rural extension. Look for potential cluster box unit (CBU) and parcel locker sites. (All new neighborhood and delivery collection box units (NDCBs) are referred to as CBUs.)
- e. Meet with civic leaders, such as the mayor and local business managers. Working with the Facilities Service Office, look for potential alternate quarters and community Post Office (CPO) sites. Inquire into community interest and availability of quarters for contracting a CPO (see section Prohibited Locations for prohibited locations).

Complete the Post Office survey sheet and community survey sheet. See Exhibit 221F. Complete PS Form 4920. See Exhibit 221F. The PS Form 4920 must contain accurate data. The expense part of PS Form 4920 includes the basic postmaster salary without cost of living adjustment (COLA) (use Step 1 for vacant positions), 33.5 percent fringe benefits, and rent (excluding utilities). If the postmaster evaluation has been reduced, base the expenses on the EAS grade at which the position would be filled. See Exhibit 221F (pages 4 and 5) for postmaster salaries. It is the Post Office review coordinator's responsibility to update salary schedules in this guide. Hourly rate schedules are posted on the human resources Web site at <http://blue.usps.gov/hrispcomp>.

23 Analyzing Service Alternatives

231 General

Rank possible replacement services in order of practicality, costs, and the need to maintain effective and regular service to the community. In some cases, a combination of services may prove beneficial to customers and the Postal Service. A Post Office closing/discontinuance or consolidation may affect the Post Office box (O. Box) fees for customers. If so, state this include such information in any subsequent proposal. See the *Domestic Mail Manual* and Notice 123 for information on Post Office box (O. Box) fees. *It is imperative that effective, regular service be maintained, since the law requires the maintenance of a maximum degree of regular and effective service to rural areas.* If the an office is given/undergoes an emergency suspension, the temporary alternate service should be the one that most likely to become the permanent alternate service on any later proposal.

232 Types of Alternate Retail Services

232.1 Consolidation

232.11 General

Consolidation involves replacing an independent Post Office with a classified station, branch, or contractor-operated community Post Office that reports to an administrative Post Office. No address changes are required. Consult the vice president, Area Operations, for ZIP Code elimination of stations and branches. A consolidation of an independent Post Office to a station or branch also requires the approval of the vice president, Area Operations, for ZIP Code elimination.

A consolidation arises when a Postal Service-operated retail facility is replaced with a contractor-operated retail facility.

232.2 Prohibited Locations

Postal units/Contractor-operated retail facilities may not be located in or directly connected to a room in which intoxicating beverages are sold to be consumed/for consumption on the premises.

~~232.13 Community Post Office~~**232.3 Contractor-Operated Retail Facility**

Visit potential CPO sites to determine whether there are interested licit interest among qualified offerors for a contractor-operated retail facility. A CPO contractor-operated retail facility is usually located in an established business, such as a grocery store, and often adds to the financial base of the community. Postal services are usually identical to those of an independent Post Office, except for postage meter settings and permit mailings. Nonpostal services continue to be available at a CPO. Hours of operation are generally the same as the evaluated hours of the Post Office. Many types of postal services can be provided through contractor-operated facilities. Permit mailings cannot be entered via contractor-operated facilities. Non-postal services may be made available at a contractor-operated retail facility. Hours of operation often exceed those in a Postal Service-operated retail facility. Before proposing a CPO contractor-operated retail facility, be sure that there are of interested offerors and that a reasonable offer can be expected. The economy of the area must be considered in determining a reasonable bid. When establishing a CPO contractor-operated retail facility, refer to the Denver Category Management Center (CMC).

~~232.14 Classified Station or Branch~~

Classified stations and branches offer the same postal and nonpostal services as those of an independent Post Office.

~~232.15 Contract Station or Branch~~

Contract stations or branches offer the same postal and nonpostal services as those of an independent Post Office, except for postage meter settings and permit mailings.

~~232.2 Closing~~~~232.24 General~~**A Post Office closing 233 Types of Alternate Delivery Services****233.1 Discontinuance**

A discontinuance involves ending operations at an independent Post Office and providing alternate services from another office, Classified Station, or Classified Branch. Normally, the ZIP Code for each address served by a discontinued Post Office retail facility is retained. A Post Office closing discontinuance does not require a change in ZIP Code unless ZIP Code elimination is approved in writing by the vice president Vice President, Area Operations. Do not make a request for ZIP Code elimination unless needed for logistics to provide efficient mail service. Obtain written authorization for ZIP Code elimination Resolve whether a ZIP Code will be eliminated before telling customers that their ZIP Code will change and before beginning the 60-day proposal posting period (see sections 642.2 and 642.3).

233.2 Rural and Highway Contract Route Delivery Service

Evaluate For rural and contract delivery service, evaluate the route workload and determine the (1) whether any change in evaluation and other cost factors. Is the route overburdened? Has there been mail theft or vandalism on the route? Will service be or overburden will exist. (2) optimum mode of delivery, whether to roadside mailboxes installed by customers, to CBUs, or will both options be provided to customers? If CBUs are selected, provide parcel lockers for customer convenience, or cluster box units (CBUs) or both, or (3) whether mail theft or vandalism issues exist on the route. Customer addresses may change. However, however, the community name and ZIP Code are ordinarily retained in the address. Customers will have 24-hour access to their mail and can obtain retail services only through the carrier. Consult a customer rural or contract delivery service analyst to determine the change in workload and cost to provide delivery. See Exhibit 232.22 for sample analysis forms carrier.

233.3 Rural Nonpersonnel Rural Unit

In a nonpersonnel unit, the Postal Service leases space in a facility, offers retail services each delivery day, and maintains Post Office boxes may deliver to CBU's or P.O. Boxes. The carrier brings mail to the office, distributes mail into the boxes delivery receptacles, and provides retail services for a specified time. Retail services are available a minimum of 15 minutes each delivery day. The nonpersonnel unit provides a centralized location for customers to meet, and retains allows the community to retain a retail outlet in the community. Address changes are ordinarily not required. If space is leased in another business or in the community, this may provide customers with improved accessibility to their Post Office boxes access to delivery and retail services. It is very important to discuss this option with the carrier. A customer service analyst can assist in evaluating the carrier workload and the cost analysis, and other delivery personnel.

24 Recommendation to Management

241 General

When the initial investigative data are compiled and analyzed, the Post Office review coordinator makes a recommendation to the manager, Operations, to pursue or not to pursue the discontinuance and the preferred alternate service. The justification for discontinuance must be documented in the record.

242 Justification for Discontinuance

Examples of justification for discontinuance include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a. The lease is canceled by the lessor. The Facilities Service Office advises that no suitable alternate quarters are available. (Include a copy of the letter of termination in the official record.)
- b. The lease is canceled by the Postal Service because of the inadequacy of the facility or unreasonable rental increase demands by the lessor. The Facilities Service Office advises that no suitable alternate quarters are available. (Include documentation in the official record that supports the Postal Service's decision to cancel the lease and explains what efforts were made to find alternative quarters.)
- c. The postmaster position is vacant. Service needs in the community have declined and the recommended alternate service would provide as good or better service to the community. (Include documentation in the official record to support such statements.)
- d. A natural disaster, such as a flood or fire, makes it impossible to continue services at the Post Office. The Facilities Service Office advises that no suitable alternate quarters are available.

Notes: In and of itself, any of the various conditions discussed in part Insufficient Circumstances to Study for DI do not generally constitute justification for discontinuance. However, consider all such conditions with other factors in the preproposal investigation.

243 Decision to Proceed with Discontinuance Investigation

If the manager, Operations, wants to continue the investigation, then develop a questionnaire and send it to customers for additional information and comments. Also, schedule a community meeting (see subchapters Customer Questionnaires and Conducting a Community Meeting).

~~25~~ Customer Questionnaires

24 Customer Questionnaires

~~241~~ Purpose

Questionnaires are used to gather additional information about a community and its postal customers and their access to delivery and retail services. This information helps the Postal Service to determine the service needs of the community. The information also helps in assessing the most efficient and economical way to provide those services. See Exhibit 251 for a sample letter to the postmaster or OIC regarding distribution of the questionnaire.

~~Developing~~ 242 Preparing the Questionnaire

~~252.1~~ General

tailor questionnaires to the community and to the type of service deemed most appropriate to serve the needs of that community. Use appropriate phrases and proper tense when referring to a suspended office. Provide customers with a preaddressed business reply envelope for returning the completed questionnaire. See part Sample Community Questionnaires and Cover Ltr for sample questionnaires.

242.1 Enclosures

242.11 Cover Letter

Include a A cover letter must be included online or enclosed with each printed questionnaire that clearly explains the alternate services under consideration and discontinuance process and why the Postal Service is considering a change in service. Be sure to provide the name, address, and telephone number of a Postal Service representative for customers to contact for additional information. investigating the possible discontinuance of a facility. The cover letter may should also be used to notify customer the customer of the time any possible change in delivery and retail services, and location of a community meeting. Give customers a deadline to return the questionnaires (sample: 14 days). You may also give customers the option of returning the questionnaires at a community meeting. See part Sample Community Questionnaires and Cover Ltr for sample questionnaires and cover letters any changes to P.O. Box fees.

~~252.22~~ Summary of Post Office Change Regulations

Include a copy of the *Summary of Post Office Change Regulations* with each questionnaire and cover letter (see Exhibit 252.22).

Note: Do not include the *Summary of Post Office Change Regulations* to customers when discontinuing a classified station, branch, or CPO.

~~252.23~~ Rural and Highway Contract Route Services

The fact sheets on rural delivery service shown in Exhibit 252.23 may be enclosed with the questionnaire to provide a more detailed explanation to customers of the services available from rural route and highway contract route carriers. Enclose the fact sheet on neighborhood and delivery collection box units (NDCBUs) and cluster box units (CBUs) shown in Exhibit 252.23 when CBUs and parcel lockers are being recommended.

~~253~~ ~~Sample Community Questionnaires and Cover Letters~~

~~253.1~~ ~~Proposal for CPO — Office Not Suspended~~

~~Exhibit 253.1~~ provides a sample of a cover letter and community questionnaire for opening a CPO when services at the independent Post Office have not been suspended.

~~253.2~~ ~~Proposal for CPO — Office Suspended~~

~~Exhibit 253.2~~ provides a sample of a cover letter and community questionnaire for opening a CPO when service at an independent Post Office is suspended and a temporary CPO is established.

~~253.3~~ ~~Proposal for CBU, Roadside Box, or Nonpersonnel Rural Unit — Office Not Suspended~~

~~Exhibit 253.3~~ provides a sample cover letter and community questionnaire for converting service at a nonsuspended Post Office to rural or highway contract route service to CBUs, roadside boxes, or a nonpersonnel rural unit.

~~253.4~~ ~~Proposal for CBU, Roadside Boxes, or Nonpersonnel Rural Unit — Office Suspended~~

~~Exhibit 253.4~~ provides a sample cover letter and community questionnaire for converting service at a suspended Post Office to rural or highway contract route service to CBUs, roadside boxes, or a nonpersonnel rural unit.

242.12 Questionnaire

The customer questionnaire containing the name of the affected retail facility and the customer's address should be mailed to all P.O. Box and carrier delivery customers of the affected facility. The mailing should include the cover letter, customer questionnaire, copy of the *Summary of Postal Service Retail Facility Change Regulations*, and a pre-addressed postage paid envelope for return of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire, customer letter, and *Summary of Postal Service Retail Facility Change Regulations* should be posted in the lobby of the affected retail facility with an indication that copies are available upon request.

242.13 Preparing the Questionnaire

The cover letter and questionnaire containing the name of affected retail facility and customer's address should be prepared to include the date the completed questionnaire should be returned. Additional cover letters and questionnaires should be prepared with the affected retail facility name and designated space for customer to complete their name and address.

The additional questionnaires are to be placed in the local installation for walk-in customers and for delivery customers requesting to complete more than one questionnaire per household.

242.14 Receipt of Customer Feedback

Customers should be provided a deadline, five to seven days from the day of receipt, to enter their feedback online or return the printed questionnaire. Customers should also be provided a phone number for the district Consumer & Industry Contact Office and the P.O. Box address designated for discontinuance communications. Written comments may be hand-delivered to the local postmaster, OIC, or other responsible personnel, who should forward such comments to the Manager, Consumer & Industry Contact.

The Manager, Consumer & Industry Contact, is responsible for answering customer questionnaires, as appropriate, and ensuring that the Discontinuance Coordinator is provided copies of all customer letters and responses, which become part of the official record. When appropriate, certain personally identifiable information, such as individual names, and residential addresses and telephone numbers, may be redacted from the publicly accessible copy of the record. See 42 for how to handle customer comments.

243 Analyzing Customer Questionnaires

After the response deadline expires, prepare the Discontinuance Coordinator timely prepares a questionnaire analysis in a timely manner. See Exhibit 254. Group written customer comments by subject and count them. Address these comments in Section I or Section II. Maintain copies of the proposal as appropriate. Include all returned questionnaires and response letters for inclusion in the official record. (This includes questionnaires, including those submitted after the deadline. (Written customer comments submitted at any time, and responses, should always become part of the official record.)

255 Acknowledging Customer Questionnaires

Provide written acknowledgment to customers thanking them for returning the questionnaires. Be sure to answer any specific comments or concerns noted on the questionnaires. This means writing individual letters when necessary. See Exhibit 255 for a sample acknowledgment letter.

Conducting a Management's Recommendation

244.1 District Review

The Discontinuance Coordinator must thoroughly review the official record to ensure compliance with federal law, Postal Service policy, and the instructions in this handbook.

When the initial investigative data are compiled and analyzed along with the customer questionnaire results, the MPOO makes a recommendation to the District Manager whether to pursue the discontinuance and, if so, the preferred alternate service. The justification for discontinuance must be documented in the record.

244.2 Headquarters Preliminary Review

After the initial review and the MPOO's recommendation to proceed with study, the Headquarters Review Coordinator reviews the information in the record to ensure that appropriate justification and documentation are in accordance with federal law and Postal Service policy. If there are no issues or problems, the district Discontinuance Coordinator will be notified to proceed with the feasibility study.

244.3 Justification for Discontinuance

The justifications for proceeding with a discontinuance must relate to the criteria in 321.

244.4 Decision to Post Proposal

After the Headquarters Review Coordinator confirms that the review complies with federal law and Postal Service policy, a formal proposal to discontinue the facility is prepared and forwarded to the District Manager for review and concurrence before it is posted. See chapter 3 for further information on the proposal.

25 Community Meeting

251 General

The community meeting is an excellent opportunity to explain service alternatives, to answer customer questions about the proposed alternatives, and to help customers complete their questionnaires. A community meeting can be held anytime prior to the Final Determination unless otherwise authorized by the Vice President, Area Operations, or the Vice President, Delivery and Post Office Operations.

At the community meeting, provide the customers should be provided with reasons an explanation for the proposed change in service. State the advantages and disadvantages for them customers and for the Postal Service (i.e. for example, tell customers how whether their address will be affected and whether box P.O. Box fees will increase change if they choose that service at a neighboring Post Office retail facility). Make it clear that no final decision has been made. Do not argue or raise your voice with customers. Always tell them the truth. If the answer to a customer's question is not apparent, obtain the customer's name and address and respond in writing after the meeting. Make notes of customer concerns and responses for inclusion in the official record. However, do not tape the meeting, because this inhibits open discussion. Immediately terminate the meeting if it gets out of control.

251.1 Selecting Date and Location

Discuss The Marketing Manager should discuss the time and location of the community meeting with the postmaster or Postmaster, OIC, or other responsible personnel. Be sure to schedule the meeting at a time that encourages customer participation, such as during an evening or weekend. Potential community locations include a community center, church meeting room, city hall, school, or the Post Office postal retail facility. Designate a set time for the meeting, but be flexible enough to extend the meeting if necessary to answer customer questions. Dress appropriately for the community. If a second meeting is in order warranted, plan and schedule it according to the same guidelines as the initial meeting. If an emergency suspension is required, a community meeting should be held before the suspension if at all possible.

251.2 Notifying Customers

Notify customers of the community meeting date, time, and location at least 10 five to seven days in advance. The cover letter to the customer questionnaire provides an excellent opportunity for notifying customers of the community meeting (see section Cover Letter). If you receive information that the time is inconvenient for most customers, reschedule the meeting at a more convenient time. See Exhibit 263 for a sample notification letter.

264 Attending Meeting

The area manager, Public Affairs and Communications, should be notified of the date, time and location of the meeting. Exhibit 264a shows the addresses and telephone numbers for area managers, Public Affairs and Communications. The Post Office review coordinator and district representatives generally attend the meeting. The employees conducting the meeting must be knowledgeable about community needs and available alternate services. These employees must also possess highly developed human relations and communications skills. At the meeting, provide a sign-in roster for those attending the meeting. Provide space on the roster for the attendees' names, addresses including ZIP Codes, and telephone numbers. The sign-in roster must include the statement "This document will be entered into the official record for public viewing." See Exhibit 264b for a sample community meeting roster. If CBU's are being considered as service alternatives, hand out pamphlets or display a poster or a CBU and parcel locker to introduce customers to this proposed delivery option. Do not show pictures of CBU's that are not appropriate to the community.

252 Preparing for the Meeting

Begin preparations for community meeting immediately upon the official decision to undertake a study. The District Manager should coordinate the following activities:

- a. The Discontinuance Coordinator prepares a briefing sheet and management presentation, and prepares copies of the briefing sheet for handout at the meeting.
- b. The Manager, Marketing, finalizes the meeting logistics.
- c. The Discontinuance Coordinator prepares sign-in sheets and cluster box unit (CBU) hand-outs, if applicable.
- d. The District Manager conducts a readiness teleconference five days prior to the meeting.

253 Conducting the Meeting

The Manager, Marketing, has the overall responsibility for the community meeting. The Discontinuance Coordinator should assist with coordinating the following activities:

- a. The Manager, Marketing, sets up the meeting location and required equipment.
- b. The Discontinuance Coordinator places the sign-in sheet near the entrance of the meeting room and encourages customers to sign in.
- c. The District Manager or MPOO conducts the Management Presentation and provides responses to customer questions.
- d. The Manager, Consumer & Industry Contact, with assistance of the Discontinuance Coordinator, has responsibility for collecting customer comments and management responses.

254 Analyzing the Meeting

After the meeting, categorize customer concerns as postal and non-postal. Indicate the number of customers expressing each type of concern. Also indicate the Postal Service response. See Exhibit 26.5 for a sample format for analyzing community meetings. Consumer & Industry Contact has responsibility for providing written responses to any customer questions that were unanswered at the meeting. A record of the customer inquiries and responses should be handled as in 26.

27 Preproposal Investigation Analysis

274 General

It is important to note that the investigative process involves constant analysis and decision making. Continue to ask the following questions:

26 Is Customer Comment Letters

A written response must be sent to each customer comment. The response must address the individual concerns expressed by the customer. Consumer & Industry Contact should tailor core letters, as appropriate, to respond to customer comments.

261 Centralized Location

- a. To simplify maintenance of a centralized channel for customers' written comments and questions, they should be directed, whenever possible, to a single P.O. Box address. If customer correspondence obviously related to the discontinuance warranted?

Doesis received elsewhere it should be forwarded to or deposited at the record support P.O. Box designated for the discontinuance? study.

- ~~c. Does the recommended alternate service maintain a maximum degree of effective, regular service to the community?~~
- ~~d. Does the investigation indicate that an independent Post Office and postmaster position should be retained?~~

272 ~~Recommendation to Management~~

~~Based on the preproposal investigation, the Post Office review coordinator makes a recommendation to management. If the manager, Operations, determines to pursue discontinuance, a formal proposal is prepared for district review.~~

Response Letters

The Manager, Consumer & Industry Contact, is responsible for customer response letters using established Headquarters procedures. The customer letter and each response must be provided to the Discontinuance Coordinator for inclusion in the official record. When appropriate, certain personally identifiable information, such as individual names or residential addresses/telephone numbers should be redacted from publicly accessible copies of the record. If a core response is not available, Consumer & Industry Contact requests assistance from the Discontinuance Coordinator to develop an appropriate response.

263 Excessive Volume of Comments

If the volume of correspondence received exceeds the ability to respond in a timely manner, the Manager, Consumer & Industry Contact, notifies the Discontinuance Coordinator who seeks and coordinates field support, with the assistance of the MPOO.

3 The Proposal

31 General

311 Discontinuance Coordinator Responsibilities

The district manager, Customer Service and Sales, Discontinuance Coordinator is administratively responsible for overseeing the gathering and preserving for preservation of the official record containing all documentation used to assess the any proposed change. This includes any internal and external communications related to the discontinuance. If the proposed action appears warranted, a formal proposal to close or consolidated discontinue the Post Office facility is prepared and forwarded to the district District Manager for review and concurrence before it is posted.

311.1 Memorandum to the Record

If, at any time, discrepancies or inconsistencies appear in the record documentation, the Discontinuance Coordinator should explain and resolve the matter by preparing a written explanation for inclusion in the record (memorandum to the record). Any memorandum to the record must reflect the date responsive information was obtained as well as the date of the memorandum's inclusion in the official record.

311.2 Proposal Checklist

When investigation of the feasibility of a possible discontinuance reaches the stage where a formal proposal to discontinue an independent Post Office, Classified Station, or Classified Branch is prepared for posting, the Discontinuance Coordinator must thoroughly review the proposal and supporting record before the 60-day posting period. The Discontinuance Coordinator must complete a proposal checklist to certify that the review has been conducted and that all necessary investigation has been undertaken and documented in the official record.

311.3 Log of Post Office Discontinuance Actions

The Discontinuance Coordinator must maintain a log of discontinuance actions for each independent Post Office, Classified Station, or Classified Branch that is investigated for possible discontinuance. The log must include the name, title, and telephone number of the coordinator most familiar with the case. It must be current and available at all times. A copy of the log must be included in the official record.

312 Official Record

312.1 Review of Official Record

The Discontinuance Coordinator must thoroughly review the record to eliminate any inconsistencies, errors, or omissions. It may be necessary to add additional clarification or to correct deficiencies, update PS Form 4920 with current information, or re-post an incorrectly posted proposal. See 311.1 for information about explaining discrepancies or inconsistencies with a memorandum to the record. The Discontinuance Coordinator must validate and expressly enter into the record the log of discontinuance actions. This validation and entry certifies that the record is ready for review by the Vice President, Delivery and Post Office Operations, and, in the event of an appeal,

that it is appropriate for review by the Office of General Counsel and the Postal Regulatory Commission. See 311.3 for information about the log of discontinuance actions.

312.2 Copies of Record Documents

The official record containing *original* documents or their electronic counterparts is kept at the district level. The Discontinuance Coordinator is responsible for updating the official record from the time it arrives at the district until the end of the discontinuance process. The final entry to the record is the *Postal Bulletin Retail Facility Change Announcement*. The original official record is filed in district archives. Other copies of the record may be destroyed at the discretion of the District Manager.

313 Archiving Official Record

313.1 Preparing to Archive Record

Before permanently closing the record to be filed in district archives, the Discontinuance Coordinator must review the record documentation from the time the record was transmitted to Headquarters for final determination to ensure that all subsequent occurrences are documented chronologically. (Documents filed in the official record must be entered chronologically.) Examples of required documents include:

- a. Final determination and round-date stamps of posting and removal dates in each location.
- b. Copy of the completed *Postal Bulletin Retail Facility Change Announcement* form.
- c. Appeal notices, pleadings, and decision (when appropriate).
- d. Copy of the instructions to the local address management office to update the Address Management System (AMS) report.
- e. Copy of the published *Postal Bulletin Retail Facility Changes Announcement*.

313.2 Archiving Record

In accordance with *Electronic Records and Information Management Systems (eRIMS)*, the complete archived electronic record must be kept for two years from the end of the calendar year in which the final decision is made. The record may be disposed of after that time at the discretion of the District Manager. Electronic copies of the record (see 312.2) must be kept at the district office for six years from the end of the calendar year in which the final decision is made.

32 Components of the Proposal

321 Description

The proposal must provide a description ~~describe~~ and analysis that ~~analyze all details sufficiently details that both to~~ higher customers and senior management and to the persons served by the affected Post Office, ~~understand the nature~~ and cause of the proposed change in service and the details of the replacement service. The written proposal must address each of the areas described in 321.1 through 321.7 below.

321.1 Responsiveness to Community Postal Needs

It is the policy of the government, as established by law, that the Postal Service will provide a maximum degree of effective and regular postal services to rural areas, communities, and small towns where Post Offices are not self-sustaining. The proposal should compare and contrast the postal services available before and after the proposed

change; describe how the changes respond to the postal needs of the affected customers; and highlight particular aspects of customer service that might be more or less advantageous as well as those that might be more advantageous to respective customers.

321.2 Effect on Community

The proposal must include an analysis of the effect the proposed discontinuance might have on the community served and discuss the application of the requirements in the *Postal Operations Manual* by the retail facility.

321.3 Effect on Employees

The written proposal must summarize the possible effects of the change on the postmaster, supervisors, Postmaster and other employees of the Post Office installation considered for discontinuance. The district manager, Customer Service and Sales District Manager must suggest measures to comply with personnel regulations related to Post Office discontinuance and consolidation. (See the *Employee and Labor Relations Manual*.)

321.4 Economic Savings

The proposal must include an analysis of the economic savings to the Postal Service from the proposed action, including the cost or savings expected from each major factor contributing to the overall estimate. Follow the economic savings analysis format in the sample proposals, sample revised proposal, and sample final determination. Do not include a one-time expense for installing CBU's and parcel lockers in the economic savings analysis. Show that expense in a separate paragraph.

321.5 Other Factors

The proposal should include an analysis of other factors that the district manager, Customer Service and Sales District Manager determines necessary for a complete evaluation of the proposed change, whether favorable or unfavorable. If not already addressed elsewhere, explain how unusual services provided by the Post Office furnished to customers, such as reading mail to illiterate or blind customers, or special accommodations for physically challenged customers, can be provided upon the Post Office discontinuance.

321.6 Summary

The proposal must include a summary that explains why the proposed action is necessary and assesses how factors supporting the proposed change outweigh any negative factors. In taking competing considerations into account, the need to provide effective and regular service is paramount.

321.7 Notice

The proposal must include the following notice:

- (1) *Support*Supporting Materials (all facility types). "Copies of all materials on which this proposal is based are available for public inspection at the _____ Post Office(s) _____ during normal office hours."
- (2) *Proposal (office*facility not suspended). "This is a proposal. It is not a final determination to (close) (consolidate) this Post Office facility. If a final determination is made to (close) or consolidate this Post Office facility, after public comments on this proposal are received and taken into account, a notice of that final determination will be posted in this Post Office. The final determination will contain instructions on how affected customers may appeal that decision to the Postal Rate Commission. Any such appeal must be received by the commission within 30 days of the posting of the final determination." facility."

- (3) Proposal (suspended office/facility). "This is a proposal. It is not a final determination to (close) (consolidate) this Post Office/facility. If a final determination is made to (close) (consolidate) this Post Office/facility, after public comments on this proposal are received and taken into account, a notice of that final determination will be posted in the (name of administrative office) Post Office. The final determination will contain instructions on how affected customers may appeal that decision to the Postal Rate Commission. Any such appeal must be received by the Commission within 30 days of the posting of the final determination.").
- (4) Appeal rights (Post Offices only, whether suspended or not suspended). "The final determination will contain instructions on how affected customers may appeal that decision to the Postal Regulatory Commission. Any such appeal must be received by the Commission within 30 days of the posting of the final determination."

33 Official Administrative Record

331 Description

The official record includes all information that the District Manager has considered, and the decision must stand on the record. No written information or views submitted by customers may be excluded, whether they support the proposal or not. The discontinuance process can be lengthy, and more than one Discontinuance Coordinator may be involved in the investigation. The official record must be updated and maintained in an accurate and timely manner to assist new coordinators and others who review record documentation.

332 Format

The record must be maintained in the following format:

- The record is assigned a docket number, which is the ZIP Code™ for the Post Office, Classified Station or Classified Branch studied for possible discontinuance.
- Upon inclusion in the record, each document is assigned a sequential number that becomes its item number. The docket number and item number are placed in the upper right corner of each document when entered into the record.
- A numeric rather than alphabetical numbering system is used. Page numbers can be assigned consecutively throughout the document and/or consecutively within each item. Page numbers should also be placed in the upper right corner of each page within every document, below the docket and item numbers.
- Items are filed in chronological order. As written communications are received in response to the public notice, invitation for comments or otherwise, each is included in the record (usually, but not necessarily, together with its written response).
- A chronological index is included that identifies each document by item number and the date entered into the record.
- The entire record is bound in a folder that opens from the side. A label bearing the installation name and docket number is displayed on the folder cover.

333 Content

These conditions apply to the content:

- Do not refer to individual customers by name in the index or proposal.
- Ensure that photocopies or scanned versions of documents in the record are legible, and that both sides of two-sided documents are included.

- d. Ensure that each statement in the proposal is supported evidence in the record.
- e. Include updated PS Form 4920 to reflect updated information when necessary. If operations in an office are suspended, copy the information that has not changed and update other data on the new PS Form 4920. Keep old PS Forms 4920 in their chronological place in the record.
- f. Review the record to ensure it is accurate and in compliance with federal law, Postal Service policy, and the instructions in this handbook.

334 Availability of Record to Public

A complete copy of the record must be available for public inspection during normal office hours at the installation under study for discontinuance or, if the installation has been temporarily suspended, at the installation providing alternative service, as well as any office likely to serve a significant number of customers of the office under study. The public inspection period must begin no later than the date when the proposal is posted and extends through the posting period. Provide copies of documents in the record on request and collect payment of any fees prescribed by chapter 4 of Handbook AS-353, *Guide to Privacy, the Freedom of Information Act, and Records Management*. Provide copies of the proposal and comment form on request without charge.

34 Writing Tips

341 Numbers

- a. Always spell out a number that begins a sentence. Example: "Twenty-five customers attended the community meeting."
- b. For consistency, always spell out use the same style to express related numbers. Example: "Seventeen Post Office boxBox and six general delivery customers chose the same type of delivery at the Skyline Post Office, 1 mile10 miles away, rather than accepting rural route delivery to CBUs."
- c. SpellIn general, spell out numbers one to nine. Use , and use figures for numbers above nine. Use figures forIf numbers that one to nine precede any unit of measurement or time. However, use figures. As noted in section b above, however, use the same style to express related numbers as mentioned in part 331b. If most of the numbers are below ten10, spell them out those that are below 10. If most of the numbers are above ten10, express them all in figures.
 - Example A (most numbers are below ten10): "There are two mills, one school, one church, and 21 stores in the community."
 - Example B (most numbers are above ten10): "The Little Towne Post Office serves 97 rural route customers, 57 Post Office boxBox customers, and 9 general delivery customers."

342 Contractions

Do notAvoid use of contractions, such as "can't" or "couldn't."

343 Time

Throughout the proposal, type the abbreviations a.m. and p.m. in small letters followed by periods, but no spaces. Example: "Prior to suspension of service, the Furry River Post Office provided service from 7 a.m. to 12 noon and from 3 to 6 p.m. on Monday through Friday, and from 7 to 11 a.m. on Saturday." (Notice that when using a.m. to a.m. and p.m. to p.m., the first a.m. or p.m. is omitted.)

344 **Customer Names**

Do not refer to individual customers by name in the proposal or in the official record index. Do not refer to customers using terms that might be understood as lacking respect, e.g., senior citizens as "old people," "old folks," or "elderly."

335 **Sample Paragraphs for Proposal**

See Exhibit 335 for sample paragraphs to help in writing proposals. Select appropriate paragraphs from each group and tailor them to the situation.

336 **Sample Proposal**

See Exhibit 336 for a sample written proposal.

35 **60-Day Posting Period**

351 **Before Posting**

District 351.1 Discontinuance Coordinator Review

Before posting, the investigative coordinator submits a copy of the proposal, PS Form 4920, *Post Office Closing or Consolidation - Proposal Fact Sheet*, and a completed district Discontinuance Coordinator validates the proposal checklist to the district coordinator for review. After review, the district coordinator signs the proposal checklist to certify and certifies that the review has been conducted and all required activities performed. See Exhibit 341.1 for a sample proposal checklist.

351.2 Notification to Government Relations and Public Policy

The district manager, Customer Service and Sales, District Manager must notify provide advance notification to Government Relations and Public Policy at Headquarters and to Area Public Affairs and Communications at least 70 days before posting the proposal for the 60-day posting period. Provide aAn electronic copy of the proposal and PS Form 4920 should be provided with this notification. See Exhibit 341.2 for a sample notification letter to Government Relations and Public Policy.

341.3 ZIP Code Elimination

341.31 Proposed Closing

If it is desirable to eliminate the ZIP Code of the Post Office proposed for closing, the district manager, Customer Service and Sales, must submit a written request and justification to the vice president, Area Operations, before the proposal is posted for the 60-day posting period. Normally, the ZIP Code for each address served by a discontinued Post Office is retained. Thus, the district manager, Customer Service and Sales, must never advise a community that it will lose its ZIP Code without first receiving written permission from the vice president, Area Operations (see subchapter 64 for ZIP Code elimination).

341.32 Proposed Consolidation

When a Post Office is proposed for consolidation and it is proposed to establish a Community Post Office, station, or branch, the ZIP Code remains the same as the original Post Office. Consult your vice president, Area Operations, for name and ZIP Code elimination for community Post Offices, stations, and branches.

352 Posting

352.1 General

A copy of the written proposal and a signed an invitation for comments must be prominently posted in each affected Post Office for at least 60 days in the retail facility under study, the retail facility proposed to serve as the supervising facility, and any facility likely to serve a significant number of customers of the retail facility under study. Always begin the count at day zero, with the day after posting becoming day one. For offices that whose operations are suspended, the posting is ~~done~~ instead takes place at the offices Postal Service-operated retail installation providing alternate alternative service, since that is where customers can see it. The proposal and invitation for comments must be round-date-stamped on the date of posting and the date of removal. Provide the affected Post Offices facilities with additional copies of the proposal and comment forms to be given to customers on request. A copy of the official record must also be available at affected offices facilities for public inspection during normal office hours. Copies of documents in the official record are available on payment of the fees established in *Administrative Support Manual* 352.7 in accordance with 334 above.

352.2 Letter of Instructions

The Post Office review coordinator Discontinuance Coordinator sends a letter of instructions, and copies of the proposal and invitation for comments, to the postmaster or OIC responsible personnel at each affected office to explain facility for posting as required by section 352.1. The letter of instructions explains procedures for posting the proposal and the invitation for comments. See Exhibit 342.2 for a sample letter of instructions. Include in the letter the dates for posting (at least 60 days). In computing the posting days, begin the count with zero as the first day and include every calendar day thereafter for at least 60 days. This computation ensures that the proposal is available for the mandatory 60 days required by law. Documents should be posted at the start of business hours and removed on the appropriate day at the close of business.

352.3 Invitation for Comments

An official invitation for comments, signed by the manager, Post Office Operations, or the district manager, Customer Service and Sales, must be round-date-stamped and posted, at the same time as the proposal, for at least 60 days. The invitation for comments must state a deadline for customer comments. The invitation must also include the name, address, and telephone number of the Postal Service representative to contact about the proposal and must indicate that copies of the proposal and comment forms are available on request. See Exhibit 342.3 for a sample invitation for comments in the affected facilities.

352.4 Comment Forms

These Comment forms, along with a copy of the proposal, must be made available to customers on request. No fee is charged for these copies. Use this form only during the 60-day posting period. See Exhibit 342.4 for a sample comment form. Any comment forms completed by customers and provided to responsible persons must be promptly forwarded to the Discontinuance Coordinator.

353 After Posting

353.1 Letter of Instructions

Before the end of the 60-day posting period, the Post Office review coordinator Discontinuance Coordinator must send a letter of instruction to the postmaster or OIC at the affected Post Offices instructions for removal of the proposal and the invitation for comments to responsible personnel at the affected facilities where the proposal is posted under 352.1. The instructions must provide the date for removing the proposal and the invitation for

comments and ~~The instructions must instruct~~ also advise the postmaster of OIC ~~responsible facility personnel~~ to round-date stamp both the proposal and the invitation for comments on the date of removal and return them, with the official record, to the coordinator ~~Discontinuance Coordinator~~. The instructions must also include guidelines for posting the *Notice of Taking Proposal and Comments Under Internal Consideration*. See ~~Exhibit 343.1~~ for a sample letter of instructions for removal of the proposal and invitation for comments.

353.2 Notice of Taking Proposal and Comments Under Internal Consideration

The postmaster of OIC ~~Responsible personnel~~ at the affected Post Office facilities where the proposal has been posted under section 352.1 must post a *Notice of Taking Proposal and Comments Under Internal Consideration* after the 60-day posting period of the proposal and invitation for comments. This notice should be posted until further instructions are received from the coordinator. See ~~Exhibit 343.2~~ for a sample notice of taking proposal and comments under internal consideration. ~~Discontinuance Coordinator~~.

353.3 Analysis of Comments

The coordinator ~~The Discontinuance Coordinator~~ prepares an analysis of customers' written comments. Group the comments by the type of concern (postal and non-postal) and by subject. Indicate the number of customers expressing each concern. If no comments are received, the coordinator ~~Discontinuance Coordinator~~ prepares a memorandum for the record stating that no comments were received. See ~~Exhibit 343.3~~ for a sample analysis of on-day posting comments and a sample memorandum to the record. If possible, comments subsequently received should also be included in the analysis. The analysis should list and briefly describe each point favorable to the proposal and each point unfavorable to the proposal. To the extent possible, the analysis should identify how many comments support each point listed. After completing the analysis, the District Manager must review the proposal and re-evaluate all the tentative conclusions previously made in light of additional customer information and views in the record.

353.4 Response to Customer Comments

A written response must be sent to each customer comment. The response must address the individual concerns expressed by the customer. See ~~Exhibit 343.4~~ for a sample response letter.

36 Revising Proposal

361 Definition

A revised proposal contains new information obtained during and after the 60-day posting period. In essence, it is a new proposal that updates the original proposal. If there are no changes to the original proposal and no comments were received, a revised proposal is not necessary. However, a memorandum ~~must~~ should be included in the record stating the dates and locations of the original proposal postings and the proposal was posted while noting that there were no changes to or comments on or other reasons for modifying the proposal have triggered revision.

362 Components of Revised Proposal

362.1 Description

Most sections in a revised proposal are identical with the original proposal. Exceptions are listed in the following sections. Be sure to substitute the terms "revised proposal" throughout the text where appropriate. See ~~Exhibit 352.1~~ for a sample of a revised proposal.

362.2 Cover Page

Change the cover page to read “revised proposal.” See Exhibit 352.1.

362.3 Responsiveness to Community Postal Needs

Update the proposal to include information about posting of the original proposal, the comments received, and Postal Service responses to those comments. State the number of comments received and indicate whether each was favorable or unfavorable. List each concern, the number of customers expressing that concern, and the Postal Service response.

362.4 Effect on Community

Make sure that this section reflects current information about the community. ~~Example: Businesses are correctly-~~ For example, ensure that businesses are listed correctly. If information in the official record is ambiguous or incorrect, resolve the ambiguity or error using a memorandum to the record.

362.5 Effect on Employees

Note any changes that have occurred since the 60-day posting period.

362.6 Economic Savings

Update salary information and other economic factors, as appropriate.

362.7 Summary

Revise the summary to include information regarding posting of the original proposal at respective locations and ~~heavy~~ comments received.

362.8 Notice

Change the word “proposal” to “revised proposal” where appropriate. See Exhibit 352.1.

363 60-Day Posting Period

If a significant change is made in the proposal (e.g., a change in the proposed type of ~~alternate~~alternative service), repost the revised proposal with an invitation for comments for a new 60-day posting period. Use the procedures in subchapter 34 352.

363.1 Significant Change

The following is an example of a significant change. The original proposal was to extend rural delivery. After reviewing customer comments, it is determined that a CPO contractor-operated retail facility would better meet the needs of the community. The revised proposal is to establish a CPO rather than to extend rural delivery. The revised proposal entails establishment of a contractor-operated retail facility instead. This revised proposal must be posted for a new 60-day posting period. After that 60-day posting requirement is met, follow the procedures in part 343 353.

~~4 Transmittals and Headquarters Review/Decision~~

~~41 Review~~

~~411 Official Record Review~~

~~The official record must be thoroughly reviewed and the reason for discontinuance must be documented in the record. The PS Form 4920 and revised proposal must reflect current information.~~

~~412 Certification of Record~~

~~After a complete review of the record is conducted and necessary updates and corrections are made, the district manager, Customer Service and Sales, prepares a memorandum for the record certifying that all comments and documents in the record are originals or true copies of the originals (see Exhibit 412).~~

~~413 Transmittal Letter from MPOO~~

~~The manager, Post Office Operations (MPOO), must prepare a memorandum to the district manager, Customer Service and Sales. Enclose the original and one copy of the official record. Make sure that both sides of documents are copied when applicable. Inform the district manager, Customer Service and Sales, to keep the original record for district archives and to send the second copy to the vice president, Delivery and Retail, at Headquarters (see part Transmittal Letter from District to Headquarters and Exhibit 413).~~

4 Final Determination

4241 District Review

411 Official Record Review

The district coordinator The official record must be thoroughly reviewed, and the reason for discontinuance must be documented in the record. The more recent PS Form 4920 and, if applicable, the revised proposal must reflect current information. The Discontinuance Coordinator must thoroughly review the official record to ensure compliance with federal law, Postal Service policy, and the instructions in this guidehandbook.

412 Log of Post Office Discontinuance Actions

Before forwarding the official record to the District Manager and Headquarters, the district Post Office review coordinator must Discontinuance Coordinator must certify, and enter into the record a completed log of Post Office discontinuance actions. This log certifies that a thorough review of the official record is completed and that everything is in order. It is the district Post Office review coordinator's Discontinuance Coordinator's responsibility to update the log throughout the discontinuance process. See Exhibit 422 for a sample log of Post Office discontinuance actions.

413 Transmittal Letter from Manager, Post Office Operations

423 The MPOO, must transmit a memorandum to the District to Headquarters

The district manager, Customer Service and Sales, keeps the original Manager along with a complete copy of the official record for district files and sends the second copy of the record (with original photos) to the vice president, Delivery and Retail, at Headquarters. See Exhibit 423 for a sample transmittal letter.

Headquarters Acknowledgment414 Certification of Receipt of Official Record

If an acknowledgment of Headquarters' receipt of official record is desired, prepare an acknowledgment form and send it and a self-addressed postagepaid envelope with the transmittal of the official record to Headquarters. The date Headquarters receives and logs in the record is entered on the acknowledgment form, which is then returned to the district. Add this date to the district log of Post Office discontinuance actions. Acknowledgment requests are optional. See Exhibit 424 for a sample acknowledgment of receipt form.

43 Headquarters Review

431 General

At Headquarters, the vice president, Delivery and Retail, forwards the official record for the proposed discontinuance to the Headquarters Post Office review coordinator. The Headquarters Post Office review coordinator reviews official records in the order received, except in special circumstances. Each proposal is evaluated on its own merit. Final determinations and appeal decisions are based on the information in the official record. Thus, the importance of thorough documentation cannot be overemphasized. It may be necessary to return the record, with instructions, to the district manager, Customer Service and Sales, for additional information. Add a copy of each such instruction and response to the official records.

432 Determinations

432.1 Returned for Further Action or Information

If the official record contains deficiencies or inconsistencies, it may be returned to the district manager, Customer Service and Sales, with written instructions to give additional consideration to specific areas in the record or to provide additional information. See Exhibit 432. After a complete review of the record is conducted and necessary updates and corrections are made, the District Manager prepares a memorandum for the record certifying that all comments and documents in the record are originals or true copies of the originals.

415 Review and Re-Evaluation by District Manager

The District Manager must review the proposal and re-evaluate all previous conclusions in light of additional customer information and views in the record, as well as the MPOO's memorandum. The District Manager must then decide whether the proposed discontinuance is warranted.

415.1 For a sample letter returning the record for further action or information, include these instructions and the responses in the official record. No determination is reached at this point. The district manager, Customer Service and Sales, may resubmit the proposal and official record to Headquarters after providing further documentation or clarification. Follow the procedures in subchapter District Review for resubmitting proposals.

Proposal Not Warranted

When the vice president, Delivery and Retail, determines that the proposal is not warranted, the proposal is denied and no further action may be taken on the record sent. The record is returned to the district manager, Customer Service and Sales, with written reasons for the determination. See Exhibit 432.2a. The district manager, Customer Service and Sales, must then prominently post a notice in the affected Post Offices stating If the District Manager decides against the proposed discontinuance, the District Manager must then prominently post a notice in the affected facilities where the proposal was posted under section 352.1. The notice must state that the proposal has been found unwarranted and that no further action is to take place on this the proposal to discontinue that Post Office. See Exhibit 432.2b for a sample notice. the installation is planned. The following are examples of reasons why a proposal may not be warranted:

- a. The reason for the discontinuance is inappropriate or based solely on economic reasons operation of a small Post Office at a deficit.
- b. Documentation in the record does not support the proposal.
- c. The proposed alternate service does not provide effective and regular service to the community.

- d. The discontinuance investigation was not conducted in accordance with the law and Postal Service policy.

~~432.3~~ ~~415.2~~ **Proposal Warranted**

~~432.31~~ ~~General~~

~~When the vice president, Delivery and Retail, determines that proposal is warranted, a written final determination under cover letter is sent; Transmittal from District to the district manager, Customer Service and Sales. See Exhibit 432.31 for a sample transmittal letter and sample final determinations for closing and consolidating independent Post Offices. Headquarters~~

If the District Manager decides that the proposed discontinuance is justified, the District Manager provides a complete file of the official record to the Vice President, Delivery and Post Office Operations, at Headquarters. In his or her transmittal, the District Manager must certify the official record is complete and that all documents in the record are originals or true and correct copies.

42 Headquarters Review

421 General

At Headquarters, the Vice President, Delivery and Post Office Operations, forwards the official record of the proposed discontinuance to the Headquarters Review Coordinator. The Headquarters Review Coordinator reviews official records in the order received, except in special circumstances. Each proposal is evaluated on its own merit. Final determinations and any decision on appeal must rely exclusively and completely upon information in the official record. Thus, thorough documentation is of the utmost importance. If necessary, return the record, with instructions, to the District Manager for additional work. Add a copy of any such instruction and response to the official record.

422 Determinations

422.1 Returned for Further Action or Information

If the official record contains deficiencies or inconsistencies, it may be returned to the District Manager with instructions to give additional consideration to specific areas in the record or to provide additional information. Include these instructions and the response in the official record. No determination is reached at this point. The District Manager may resubmit the proposal and official record to Headquarters after providing further documentation or clarification. Follow the procedures in 41 for resubmitting proposals.

422.2 Proposal Not Warranted

When the Vice President, Delivery and Post Office Operations, determines that the proposal is not warranted, the proposal is denied and no further action may be taken on the record sent. The record is returned to the District Manager and written reasons for the determination are provided. The District Manager must then prominently post a notice in the affected facilities as instructed in section 415.1.

422.3 Proposal Warranted**422.31 General**

When the Vice President, Delivery and Post Office Operations, determines that the proposal is warranted, and no further revision is necessary, authorization to proceed is provided to the District Manager. The Discontinuance Coordinator can proceed with composing the final determination and providing it to the District Manager. The following sections outline discontinuance instructions provided with the final determination document.

422.32 30-Day Public Notice

The district manager, Customer Service and Sales. The District Manager must make sure that a copy of the final determination is prominently posted in the affected Post Offices for at least 30 days in the affected facilities where the proposal was posted under 352.1. To ensure that the posting is at least 30 days, begin the count at day zero. A copy of the complete official record must be available for public inspection during normal business hours at the each affected Post Offices facility during the mandatory 30-day public notice period. See Exhibit 422.32 for a sample letter of instructions for posting the final determination. If there is an error or other reason for amending the final determination, immediately contact the Headquarters Post Office review coordinator. Review Coordinator. No changes to a final determination are authorized without Headquarters' approval; if changes are authorized and made, explanation for the change must be appended to the administrative record and the posting period must begin anew. Provide copies of documents in the record to customers on request and collect payment of any fees as prescribed by chapter 4 of Handbook AS-353, *Guide to Privacy, the Freedom of Information Act and Records Management*.

422.33 Contents of Public Notice

The posting of the final determination must include the following notice: "Copies of all materials on which this Final Determination is based are available for public inspection at the (Facility Name) during normal office hours." If the retail facility subject to discontinuance is a Post Office, the Final Determination must also include the following notice: "This Final Determination to (discontinue) (consolidate) the (Facility Name) may be appealed by any person served by that office to the Postal Regulatory Commission. Any appeal must be received by the Commission within 30 days of the date this Final Determination was posted. If an appeal is filed, copies of appeal documents prepared by the Postal Regulatory Commission, or the parties to the appeal, must be made available for public inspection at the (Facility Name) during normal office hours."

422.34 Postal Bulletin Post Office Retail Facility Change Announcement

A Postal Bulletin Post Office Retail Facility Change Announcement form is also enclosed with the final determination. The manager, Post Office Operations, MPOO or designee, must complete and mail the original and two copies email a copy of the announcement form to the Headquarters Post Office review coordinator. Review Coordinator on the day the final determination posting is removed (the first day following the completion of the 30-day public notice period). The MPOO must also include a copy of the round-date stamped final determination cover page from each location that where the final determination was posted must accompany. At Headquarters, the original announcement form. At Headquarters, the original of the announcement form and the copy of the round-date stamped final determination posting are entered into the official record. At the appropriate time, one copy of the announcement form is forwarded to Address Management at Headquarters for announcing the Post Office closing discontinuance or consolidation in the Postal Bulletin; the other is returned to the district for inclusion in the official record. See Exhibit 422.33. Do not reproduce this form. Do not mail a copy to Address Management at Headquarters.

Note: In the event that an appeal is postmarked in the 30-day period but received by the Postal Regulatory Commission after the 30-day period, the Headquarters Review Coordinator will instruct field personnel on posting requirements.

422.35 Official Discontinuance

If there are no appeals to the Postal Rate Regulatory Commission (PRC), the affected Post Office retail facility is officially discontinued the first Saturday that falls 90, at the earliest, 60 days after the first day of posting of the final determination. Please contact the Headquarters Post Office review coordinator Review Coordinator if a specific date is required for official discontinuance. However, federal law prohibits the an official discontinuance sooner than 60 days after the date the final determination was posted. Headquarters sends written notice to the district manager, Customer Service and Sales, District Manager indicating whether an appeal is filed with the PRC. If an appeal is filed, Headquarters provides written instructions on how to proceed. See chapter 5 for information on appeals.

422.35 Publication 65, National Five-Digit ZIP Code and Post Office Directory**When the district manager, Customer Service and Sales, 422.36 Address Management System Database**

When the District Manager receives written notification from Headquarters that an appeal has not been filed with the PRC (see part 514), the Post Office review coordinator Discontinuance Coordinator must instruct the field address management Address Management unit to update the Address Management System (AMS) database. A copy of that instruction must be entered in the official record. See Exhibit 422.35 for a sample letter of instruction to AMS.

422.37 Facilities Database

The Facilities Database (FDB) coordinator must monitor the system to ensure the facility status is updated to reflect "Closed".

431 Notification**431.1 To Local Officials**

Follow local instructions for reporting an official closure discontinuance within the district. Prepare a local memorandum to notify district personnel and the manager, Facilities Service Office (see Exhibit 433.1).

431.2 To Customers

Notify affected impacted customers (delivery customers of that retail facility) of the official closure by posting a notice of discontinuance in the office for 30 days (see Exhibit 433.2) writing. Additionally, the notification should also be posted in the lobby of the discontinued retail facility.

5 Appeal Procedures

51 General

511 Who May Appeal

Any person regularly served by the affected Post Office subject to discontinuance may appeal the final determination decision to the Postal Regulatory Commission. The Postal Service's legal position is that the Commission does not have jurisdiction to act on challenges to the discontinuance of subordinate retail units (such as Classified Stations and Classified Branches) or contractor-operated retail facilities. Where persons regularly served by another type of USPS-operated retail facility subject to discontinuance file an appeal with the Postal Regulatory Commission, the General Counsel reserves the right to assert defenses, including the Commission's lack of jurisdiction over such appeals. When it elects not to challenge the Commission's jurisdiction over the discontinuance of subordinate Postal Service-operated retail facilities, the Postal Service does not waive any argument that it may have in federal court or in subsequent Commission proceedings concerning the Commission's authority to adjudicate appeals of subordinate retail facilities.

512 Where to Appeal

All appeals must be directed to:

POSTAL RATE REGULATORY COMMISSION
1331 STREET 1901 NEW YORK AVENUE, NW, SUITE 300200
WASHINGTON, DC 20268-0001

513 When to Appeal

Appeals must be received by the Postal Rate Commission within 30 days of the date the final determination was posted. An appeal is considered to have been received by the Commission as follows:

- a. If the appeal is mailed to the Commission, on the date of the postmark on the envelope or other cover.
- b. If otherwise lawfully delivered to the Commission, on the date determined based on any appropriate documentation or other indicia (as determined under PRC regulations).

514 Notification to District Manager

Headquarters sends written notice provides notification to the district manager, Customer Service and Sales, District Manager indicating whether an appeal is filed. See Exhibit 514a and Exhibit 514b for sample notices.

515 Appeal Documents

The office Office of General Counsel, at Headquarters, provides the district manager, Customer Service and Sales, District Manager with copies of all pleadings, notices, orders, briefs, and opinions filed in the appeal proceedings on behalf of the Postal Rate Commission or the other parties to the appeal. The district manager, Customer Service and Sales, District Manager must ensure that copies of all these documents are

included in the official record. The District Manager must also ensure that copies of these documents are prominently displayed in the affected Post Offices, and facilities where the final determination is displayed under 422.32. The appeal documents must be made available for public inspection at the affected Post Office same facility or facilities during normal business hours. If the Post Office is suspended, display the documents in the Post Offices serving the affected customers. All documents (except the Postal Rate Commission's final order and opinion or decision) must be displayed until the final order and opinion are issued or decision issues. The final order and opinion or decision must be displayed for 30 days in the affected facilities where the final determination was displayed under 422.32. However, the final order or decision must also be displayed in the retail facility subject to discontinuance for 30 days or until the effective date of the discontinuance, whichever is sooner.

52 Discontinuance Pending Appeal

An affected Post Office installation may be discontinued before the final disposition of an appeal only by the authority of the vice president Vice President, Delivery and Retail Post Office Operations. This authority, however, does not permit discontinuance until 60 days within the 60-day period after the date the final determination is posted initial posting (see 422.35).

53 Postal Rate Regulatory Commission Decisions

531 Final Determination Affirmed

If the Postal Rate Commission dismisses the appeal or affirms the Postal Service's determination, the official closing date of the Post Office installation must be published in the Postal Bulletin, effective the first Saturday that falls 90 days after the date of the Postal Rate Commission's opinion. See Exhibit 531 for a sample notice of final determination affirmed notice from Headquarters and a sample Postal Rate Commission opinion affirming the determination decision or order, if not previously implemented in accordance with 52. In any event, this authority does not permit discontinuance until 60 days after the first date that the final determination is posted (see 422.35).

532 Final Determination Remanded

532.1 General

If the Postal Rate Commission remands the Postal Service's determination, the vice president for further action by the Postal Service, the Vice President, Delivery and Retail Post Office Operations, may determine that the discontinuance is not warranted or may return the proposal for further consideration (see sections Discontinuance Not Warranted, The Vice President, Delivery and Returned for Further Consideration). The vice president Post Office Operations, provides written instructions to the district manager, Customer Service and Sales, District Manager on the decision. See Exhibit 532.1 for a sample Postal Rate Commission opinion remanding determination.

532.2 Discontinuance Not Warranted

Based on the Postal Rate Commission's opinion decision or order, the vice president Vice President, Delivery and Retail Post Office Operations, may determine that the discontinuance is not warranted at this time. If so, the vice president Vice President, Delivery and Post Office Operations, provides written instructions to the district manager, Customer Service and Sales, District Manager to that effect. See Exhibit 532.2 for a sample final determination remanded, determined not warranted, notice from Headquarters. Based on the official record submitted, no further action may be taken to discontinue the affected Post Office installation. The district manager, Customer Service and Sales, District Manager must make sure that a copy of the Postal Rate Commission's decision or order is posted for 30 days at the affected Post Office for a period of 30 days facilities where the proposal and final determination were posted (see 352.1 and 422.32). A notice must also be posted at the same affected facilities, stating that the final determination to discontinue the

~~Post Office installation is withdrawn and that no changes in service will occur at this time must also be posted at the affected Post Office. See Exhibit 432.2b for a sample notice letter to customers.~~

532.3 Returned for Further Consideration

~~Based on the Postal Rate Commission's opinion~~decision or order, the vice president**Vice President, Delivery and Retail Post Office Operations**may determine that the discontinuance proposal requires further consideration of other service alternatives or additional investigation and documentation. See Exhibit 532.3 for a sample final determination remanded; returned for further consideration, notice from Headquarters.**The Vice President, Delivery and Post Office Operations, provides instructions for further consideration at an appropriate procedural stage.**

6 Special Considerations Circumstances

61 Emergency Suspensions

611 **Definition**

An emergency is an occurrence that constitutes a threat to the safety and health of Postal Service employees or customers or to the security of the mail or revenue. When a situation is tolerated for an extended time or is expected to occur, it probably cannot be classified as an emergency. **Circumstances that may justify an emergency a suspension include, but are not limited to, the following:**

- a. A natural disaster.
- b. Termination of a lease or rental agreement when other quarters suitable for housing an independent Post Office are not available, especially when the termination is sudden or unexpected.
- c. Lack of qualified personnel to operate the office.
- d. Severe health or safety hazard.
- e. Severe damage to, or destruction of, the office.
- f. Lack of adequate measures to safeguard the office or its revenues.

612 **Authority**

District managers, Customer Service and Sales Managers may suspend the operations of any independent Post Office, Classified Station, or Classified Branch under their jurisdiction when an emergency or other condition requires for reasons such action as those identified in 611.

613 **Notification**

613.1 **To Headquarters**

The district manager of Customer Service and Sales District Manager (or a designee) must provide immediate notice of any suspension by fax to 202-268-0002. All fax transmissions must include the originating fax number. If a fax machine is unavailable, send a written notice by Express Mail® service to:

VICE PRESIDENT DELIVERY AND RETAIL
ATTN HEADQUARTERS POST OFFICE REVIEW COORDINATOR
US POSTAL SERVICE
1351 MIAMI PLAZA SW RM 5621
WASHINGTON DC 20260-5621

See Exhibit 613-1 for a sample notice of emergency suspension Vice President, Delivery and Post Office Operations.

613.2 **To Local Officials**

Immediately contact notify the local district facility database Facility Database (FDB) coordinator. Contact information for the FDB coordinators is available on the Intranet at <http://eagmnsu0fa.usps.gov/fdb-docs/fdbcoordinatorlist.pdf>. Coordinator. Follow local

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instructions for reporting emergency suspension within the district. Use a copy of the emergency suspension notice or prepare a local memorandum (see Exhibit 613.2). Notification may be required for notification to the following:

- a. **All direct reports to the district manager.** ~~Customer Service and Sales.~~ District Manager
- b. ~~Area vice president.~~
- b. The Vice President, Area Operations.
- c. **State and national postmaster organizations.**
- d. **Transportation and logistics.**
- e. ~~Philatelic operations.~~ Operations. To stop and resume automatic distribution of commemorative stamps, notify:
 POSTAL ACCOUNTS SECTION
 FINANCE BRANCH
 MINNEAPOLIS ACCOUNTING SERVICE CENTER
 2825 LONE OAK PARKWAY
 EAGAN, MN 55121-9312.
- f. ~~Accounting services and postmaster accounts.~~
- g. ~~Mail processing and distribution center.~~
- h. ~~Address management.~~
- i. ~~Human resources.~~
- j. Postmaster or OIC at affected Post Office accounts.
- k. ~~District and subordinate Post Office review coordinators~~
- g. ~~The district Post Office review coordinator~~ The upstream Processing and Distribution Center(s) responsible for processing mail to and from the relevant retail facility.
- h. Address Management.
- i. Human Resources.
- j. Management at affected facilities, including the suspended retail facility, the supervising office, and the facilities most likely to serve a significant number of customers of the suspended retail facility.
- k. Discontinuance Coordinator.
 - (1) The Discontinuance Coordinator must be immediately provided information to enter in the log of Post Office discontinuance actions (see section 133.5). That coordinator may be called on to provide information to Government Relations and Public Policy at Headquarters during a congressional Congressional inquiry.
 - (2) A copy of the emergency suspension notice must be placed in the official record when the Post Office installation is investigated for permanent discontinuance.
- l. **Facilities Service Office for appropriate action regarding the lease and possible alternate quarters.**

613.3 To Customers

Notify affected customers immediately by individual letter. See Exhibit 613.3 for a sample customer notice of emergency suspension. Include in the notice the following information:

- a. **Effective date.**
- b. **Reason for emergency suspension.**
- c. **Alternate services available.**
- d. **Nearest Post Office retail facilities and hours of service.**
- e. **Name and telephone number of person to contact for more information.**

614 Alternate Service

Establish alternate service as quickly as possible. If a discontinuance proposal appears likely, make every effort to provide the alternate service that is most likely to be recommended in the discontinuance proposal. A change from emergency replacement service often generates community opposition regardless of the rationale. If there is enough time, conduct a community meeting before suspension to explain circumstances and obtain customer opinion about alternate service.

615 Employee Reassignment

Temporarily reassign all eligible employees of the suspended office/facility according to *Employee and Labor Relations Manual* 354. Reassignment of bargaining-unit employees must be in accordance with the applicable provisions of the National Agreement.

616 Suspension Review Team

When a district manager, Customer Service and Sales, District Manager suspends operations at a Post Office/retail facility, a suspension review team must be formed to review the decision. The suspension review team members must include the district Post Office review coordinator, manager, Post Office Operations, Discontinuance Coordinator, the MPOO or his/her designee; a representative from the Facility Services Office; and in the case of the suspension of a Post Office staffed by a postmaster, state presidents of each postmaster organization or their designees and a representative from administrative services.

- a. The Members of the suspension review team must conduct an onsite visit to the suspended Post Office/facility.
- b. Within 10 business days of the onsite visit, the suspension review team must notify the district manager, Customer Service and Sales, the national postmaster organizations and the vice president District Manager and the Vice President, Delivery and Retail, Post Office Operations, of their recommendation to suspend or not suspend the office. See Exhibit 616b for a sample notice/facility. In the case of the suspension of a Post Office staffed by a postmaster, the national postmaster organizations are also notified.
- c. If the suspension review team recommends suspension, the formal discontinuance process should be initiated.
- d. If the suspension review team finds that there is insufficient justification to suspend the office, the office/retail facility should be reopened unless otherwise directed by the Area Vice President or the Vice President, Delivery and Post Office Operations.

617 Plan of Action

The district manager, Customer Service and Sales, District Manager must determine a plan of action to restore service, secure suitable alternate quarters, take other necessary corrective action, or initiate a discontinuance study within 90 days (3 months). That plan of action must be sent in writing provided to the vice president Vice President, Delivery and Retail Post Office Operations, no later than the 90th day/90 days after suspension takes effect.

618 Restoration of Service

Immediately notify Headquarters the Vice President, Delivery and Post Office Operations, of restoration of service by fax to 2022680002. If a fax machine is unavailable, send a written notice to the following address:

VICE PRESIDENT DELIVERY AND RETAIL
ATTN HEADQUARTERS POST OFFICE REVIEW COORDINATOR
U.S. POSTAL SERVICE
475 PENNANT PLAZA S.W. RM 5021
WASHINGTON DC 20260-5021

Also send a copy of this notice to the area office. See Exhibit 618 for a sample notice of restoration of service. You must also notify the local district FDB coordinator. Contact information for the FDB coordinators is available on the Intranet at <http://eagmnsu0fa.usps.gov/fdb-docs/fdbcoordinatorlist.pdf>.

62 Post Office Name Change

~~621~~ Current Instructions

When the information in this section and chapter 7 appears to conflict with previous *Postal Operations Manual* (POM) instructions, contact the Headquarters Post Office review coordinator for guidance. The information in this guide was developed with Address Management.

621 General

A Post Office should normally bear the official name of the incorporated city, town, or borough in which it is located, as shown in its charter. A Post Office located in an unincorporated place should generally bear the approved name of the principal community served (normally the community in which located) or the approved name of the town or township, if it serves a number of communities within a town or township.

~~Changes~~ 622 Current Instructions

~~623~~ Information related to Post Office Names

A request for a change to a Post Office name should be initiated by the local postmaster. This request should be submitted through the district manager, Customer Service and Sales, to the vice president, Area Operations, for transmittal with a recommendation to the manager, Address Management, at Headquarters.

~~624~~ Community Name When Post Office Closed

When a Post Office is permanently closed and no replacement facility is established in the community, the name of the closed Post Office is normally established as a place name and used as the city name in the last line of the address. The ZIP Code is normally retained. Customers should be notified at the community meeting and in the questionnaire cover letter if the Post Office closing involves a change of address.

~~625~~ Name of Facility Established by Consolidation

Community Post Offices, stations, branches, and other named Postal Service facilities generally are given names recognized by the public, indicating their locations, using the following policies:

- a. Station Designations—A station's name should describe its location (neighborhood or section of city, for example) to the general public. There must be no duplication of station names within a single city, county, or three-digit ZIP Code area.
- b. Community Post Office (CPO) and Branch Designations—CPO and classified branch names are valid mailing names. Therefore, each CPO or classified branch must bear the name of the principal community it serves. There must be no duplication among CPO, classified branch, and Post Office names within a state. Each contract branch also must bear the name of the principal community it serves. Exceptions are historic sites, etc. (e.g., Grand Canyon Branch), which must be approved by the vice president, Operations Support. When there is a proposal to discontinue a Post Office and establish a CPO in the same community, the name of the CPO is the same as the name of the discontinued Post Office.
- c. Permanent Numbers and Letters—The use of permanent number and letter designations for branches or classified stations is prohibited, unless the number or letter signifies a location, as in M-Street Station, 3rd Avenue Station, or Fourth of July Plaza Station. Number and letter designations in use at the time of the establishment of this regulation may continue to be used permanently.

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- d. ~~Temporary Numbers and Letters.~~ Number and letter designations for branches and classified stations that do not signify locations, such as Station A or Branch #4, may be used for a period not to exceed 1 year. These designations may be used beyond 1 year only by written approval of the vice president, Area Operations.
- e. ~~Facilities Named for Individuals.~~ A Postal Service facility may be named for an individual only with the approval of the postmaster general and only if the individual has been deceased for at least 10 years, with the exception of deceased U.S. Presidents or Postmasters General. Official commitments announced prior to the establishment of this regulation will be fulfilled. Occasionally, Congress honors an individual by passing a law naming a Postal Service facility after that individual. For the procedures to be followed in such cases, see *Administrative Support Manual (ASM)* 519.2.

~~Changes in Designations of Stations, Branches, or Other Named Postal Service Facilities.~~ A local request for a change in the name of a station, branch, or other named Postal Service facility must be submitted to the vice president, Area Operations. A request that results from an official change in the community's name is handled as a change in the name of a Post Office (see *Postal Operations Manual (POM)* 123.412). The vice president, Area Operations, has authority, subject to the policies established in this section, to approve all other assignments and changes in designations of facilities, except for those discussed is provided in POM 123.413a.

623 Use of Branch or Station Designation**626.1 Purpose**

This section addresses the confusion surrounding the decision whether to designate a subordinate postal unit a station or a branch. It is intended to define the usage in an unambiguous fashion and in a way that makes the distinction between a station and a branch useful to the Postal Service and the mailing industry.

626.2 Definitions

Stations, branches, community Post Offices (CPOs), and nonClassified Stations, Classified Branches, and non-personnel units are Postal Service-operated subordinate units located within main Post Offices' service areas to provide one or more services at sites more convenient to customers. The Postal Service definitions of which requirements constitute a branch and which constitute a station The staffing of a Post Office with a Postmaster on a part-time basis or with another type of personnel does not affect that facility's status as a Post Office and does not make it a subordinate unit. The definitions of Classified Stations, Classified Branches, and non-personnel units are as follows:

- a. **Classified Units.** Classified units are stations and branches operated by Postal Service employees in quarters owned or leased by the Postal Service.
- b. **Stations.** Stations are located within the corporate limits or city carrier delivery area of the city or town in which the main Post Office is located.
- c. **Branches.** Branches are located outside the corporate limits or city carrier delivery area of the city or town in which the main office is located.
- d. ~~Contract Postal Units.~~ Contract postal units (CPIs) are stations, branches, and community Post Offices (CPOs) operated under contract by persons who are not Postal Service employees. The quarters are provided by the contractor. Contracts to operate CPIs provide that the contractor will transact specified Postal Service business.
- e. ~~Community Post Offices.~~ Community Post Offices (CPOs) are CPIs that provide service in small communities where an independent Post Office has been discontinued. A CPO bears its community's name and ZIP Code as part of a recognized mailing address.
- f. **Nonpersonnel Units.** Nonpersonnel units are small, non-staffed stations and branches that are served by a rural carrier in quarters typically provided by a contractor. The, in which case the contractor also furnishes custodial and security support. A non-personnel unit provides on a self-service basis essential mail services such as the collection and delivery of mail and the sale of stamps. Rural Non-city carriers, who are required to remain at non-personnel units for a minimum of 15 minutes each day their routes operate, provide other services such as the sale of money orders Postal Money Orders and the acceptance and

delivery of Certified Mail™, Insured Mail™, Registered Mail™, Delivery Confirmation™, and Signature Confirmation™, Collect on Delivery (COD-mail-services), and all other special services.

626.3 Naming Guidelines

Currently, mailers are advised that a station name is usually not used as the last line of address. Further, when a unit is designated as a branch, the branch name is often used as the last line of address. While this naming procedure has not been universally applied, the Postal Service wants to take advantage of any new opportunity to designate postal units with these guidelines in mind. *This is not an instruction to make wholesale changes to the existing records in the AMS file.* Rather, it is an instruction to code all new facilities with this convention. Existing facilities may be changed as time and circumstances permit.

Example 1: A subordinate unit is located outside the corporate limits of Houston, TX. The last line of the mailing address used by the community served from this unit is Houston, and the unit should be designated as a *branch*.

Example 2: A subordinate unit serves an existing community that is incorporated into the city limits of Houston, TX. The last line of the mailing address used by the community is something other than Houston, TX. This unit should be designated as a *station*.

Note: f. The designation is determined by the location of the unit inside or outside the corporate limits in these examples.

63 Merging Facilities

631 Definition

The dictionary definition of merge is "to unite or combine." In Post Office discontinuance investigations, this term is often misused and misunderstood. *All mergers are really either Mergers give rise to a closing or a consolidation and should be referred to as such. Do not use the term "merge" in the investigative process or in the proposal.* Rather, rather, refer to a closing or consolidation, as appropriate discontinuance. Coordinators generally define a merge in one of two ways:

- a. Two or more towns (each with one or more independent Post Offices) combined into a single incorporated village, town, or city with one administrative Post Office.
- b. Two or more towns (each with one or more independent Post Offices) combined by building a replacement facility (centrally located between the existing Post Offices) that serves as the administrative Post Office for all the delivery areas involved.

632 A Hypothetical Situation

632.1 Background

632.11 General

There are two rural unincorporated communities in the same geographical area. Population growth is not great; however, the communities are growing together. Each community has a Post Office. The Post Offices are located within a mile and a half of each other. For simplicity, we refer to these two facilities as Post Office A and Post Office B.

632.12 Post Office A

At Post Office A:

- a. The EAS-13 postmaster position is not vacant. The clerk and rural carrier are career employees.
- b. There are eight hours of service daily, Monday through Friday, and three hours on Saturday.
- c. The building is unsafe because of structural deterioration.
- d. There is a 30-day lease cancellation clause.
- e. There is some growth in the community.

- f. There are 350 customers: 10 general delivery, 100 Post Office box, and 240 rural route customers.
- g. Postal Service revenue has increased each of the past three fiscal years. The average number of daily retail window transactions is 48.
- h. There are two permit mailers.
- i. There are eight small businesses (two are new), two churches, and one elementary school.

632.13 Post Office B

At Post Office B:

- a. The EAS~~C-11~~ postmaster position is vacant. The OIC is non-career. No career employees are at the office.
- b. There are four hours of service daily, Monday through Saturday.
- c. The building is deteriorating and unsafe. No alternate quarters are available.
- d. There is a 30-day lease cancellation clause.
- e. There is low growth in the community.
- f. There are 30 general delivery customers.
- g. Postal Service revenue has declined each of the past three fiscal years. The average number of daily retail window transactions is 11.
- h. There are no permit mailers or postage meter customers.
- i. There are two businesses and one church in the community.

632.2 Suggested Plan of Action

632.21 Post Office A

Move the Post Office to adequate quarters. The district manager, Customer Service and Sales, District Manager does not require approval from the vice president Vice President, Delivery and Retail Post Office Operations, to move Postal Service operations from an unsuitable building to a suitable building in a geographical area where customers would have no change in service, address, or ZIP Code. However, the regulations in Title 39, *Code of Federal Regulations*, section 241.4, Expansion, Relocation, Construction of New Post Offices, must be followed, and a customer who disagrees with a local decision may appeal to the vice-president Vice President, Facilities. Explain to customers that the Post Office is not closing but moving to other suitable quarters within the community. Present the positive aspects of the move to the customers. Advise the customers that consideration is being given to serving Post Office B customers from the same facility; and in such an event, the Post Office name may change to identify both communities. If it seems desirable to ~~close~~ discontinue Post Office B, the best location for Post Office A is midway between the two Post Offices. Make sure that the new quarters can accommodate the workload of both Post Office Offices' operations. If suitable alternate quarters are not available and a new facility is constructed, the site plans and funding must be available and approved before any proposal can be presented to the customers. Do not proceed on promises or conjecture.

632.22 Post Office B

After Post Office A is moved, propose to ~~close~~ discontinue Post Office B. Use as a justification the deterioration of the building (supported by photographs and safety reports), the lack of suitable alternate quarters in the community, and the decline in service needs. Propose Post Office ~~box~~ Box and general delivery at Post Office A and extension of rural delivery from Post Office A. Propose a name change for Post Office A to identify both communities A and B. Focus on the positive aspects and service improvements of the change.

632.23 Post Office Name Change

Examples of Post Office names for this hypothetical situation are shown below. (Consult your local address management Address Management unit for name change requirements.)

- a. A & B Post Office.

b. A Post Office Serving B.

632.24 Headquarters Review

When making a proposal similar to this hypothetical situation, remember the following:

- a. The Post Office A move to suitable alternate quarters must be complete or, in the case of new construction, a target date set *before sending the proposal to close* discontinue Post Office B to Headquarters. The final determination to ~~close~~ discontinue Post Office B is decided, among other justifications, based on the definite availability of suitable quarters.
- b. Decisions to discontinue a Post Office are made on a ~~case by case~~ basis.
- b. Adequate justification for discontinuance must be clearly stated and documented in the official record.

64 ZIP Code Elimination

641 General

The ZIP Code for each address formerly served by the discontinued Post Office ordinarily is the ZIP Code of the discontinued Post Office.

642 Post Office Closing

642 Discontinuance

642.1 Community Place Name

In a Post Office ~~closing~~ discontinuance, it is customary to retain the community place name and ZIP Code of the discontinued facility. ZIP Code elimination may be approved in appropriate circumstances by the vice president, Area Operations. ~~Never advise a community that the ZIP Code will be eliminated before receiving written permission from the vice president, Area Operations.~~ If it is determined as necessary to eliminate the ZIP Code of the Post Office proposed for discontinuance, the District Manager must submit a request and justification to the Vice President, Area Operations, for approval.

642.11 Request for ZIP Code Elimination

The district manager, Customer Service and Sales, must make a written request with justification District Manager must receive approval *before* telling customers that their ZIP Code will change and *before* the 60-day proposal is posted. The request must include, at a minimum, the number of deliveries affected and the number of unused ZIP Codes remaining in the ~~three-~~ digit ZIP Code area. ~~Mail requests to the vice president, Area Operations. See Exhibit 642.2 for a sample letter requesting ZIP Code elimination.~~

642.3 Justification for ZIP Code Elimination

~~Use~~ justification for ZIP Code elimination should be based on operational requirements.

642.2 Conversion or Consolidation

When a Post Office is converted into a Classified Station or Classified Branch, or when a Postal Service-operated retail facility is consolidated by conversion into a contractor-operated retail facility, the ZIP Code remains the same as the original facility. The Vice President, Area Operations, must approve name and ZIP Code elimination for contractor-operated retail facilities, Classified Stations, and Classified Branches.

642.3 Post Office Box Range

If the ~~Post Office retail facility~~ being discontinued has Post Office ~~boxes~~ Boxes, give consideration to the Post Office ~~box~~ Box number range. Duplicate Post Office ~~box~~ Box number ranges within the same ~~finance number~~ preferred last line (City, State) create problems for mail distribution and ZIP Code assignment. Renumbering Post Office ~~boxes~~ Boxes to eliminate address duplications should be done at the time of the Post Office discontinuance.

642.4 Minimizing Address Changes for Customers

It may be necessary to evaluate the feasibility of moving Post Office Boxes to a neighboring office to minimize any customer address or ZIP Code changes. Work with district Marketing and Delivery to determine the most appropriate alternate delivery service that has the least impact on customers. This option is not recommended for customers who are receiving free Post Office Box service because they are not eligible for carrier delivery. In these instances, it is recommended that carrier delivery options including roadside boxes, cluster box units, and/or non-personnel units be pursued before evaluating movement of Post Office Box sections.

642.5 Rural and Highway Contract Delivery Route Numbers and Box Ranges

Rural route or highway contract route numbers should not be duplicated within a finance number for pay purposes. Rural route or highway contract route box numbers may not be duplicated within a route. Renumbering routes and boxes should be done at the time of the Post Office discontinuance.

642.6 Customer Notification

Customers should be notified of plans to change Post Office ~~box~~ Box numbers and the ZIP Code before the 60-day proposal posting under 35. If the address change increases Post Office ~~box~~ Box fees for any customers, specific Post Office ~~box~~ Box fee information should also be clearly communicated to customers before posting. This applies even when delivery is available and Post Office ~~box~~ Box service at a neighboring facility is a customer option.

643 Post Office Consolidation

643.1 Community Place Name and ZIP Code

When a community Post Office (CPO) ~~contractor-operated retail facility~~ is established in lieu of a Postal Service-operated retail facility, it is customary to retain the community place name and ZIP Code of the discontinued Post Office. Consult your vice president, Area Operations, regarding name and ZIP Code elimination for Community Post Offices, stations and branches ~~retail facility~~. Changes in name and ZIP codes require the approval of the Vice President, Area Operations.

643.2 Customer Notification

The first notice to customers that consideration is being given to consolidating the Post Office ~~a~~ Postal Service-operated retail facility and establishing a community Post Office (CPO) ~~contractor-operated retail facility~~ should state clearly that customer addresses will not change (except as noted in part Post Office Closing ~~approved in accordance with 642~~).

644 Official Record Documentation

644.1 Post Office Closing Discontinuance

The official record must include the ~~any~~ letter authorizing or denying ZIP Code elimination (see sections ~~232, 233~~ and Request for ZIP Code Elimination ~~642.11~~).

Service-Operated Retail Facility Discontinuance Guide

644.2 Post Office Consolidation

The official record must include the any letter authorizing or denying ZIP Code elimination (see sections 232.2233 and Request for ZIP Code Elimination 642.11).

~~7~~ **Discontinuance of Classified Stations, Branches, or CPOs**

~~71~~ **General**

Although thorough investigation and customer participation are encouraged in the discontinuance of a classified station, branch, or a community Post Office (CPO), the formal process followed in the discontinuance of independent Post Offices is not required. However, requests for discontinuance of classified stations, branches, or CPOs must be submitted in writing to the vice president, Delivery and Retail, for approval. A change from a classified station or classified branch to a nonpersonnel unit or contract postal unit (CPO) is considered a discontinuance and must be submitted for approval.

~~72~~ **Responsibilities**

~~721~~ **District Manager, Customer Service and Sales**

The district manager, Customer Service and Sales, is responsible for submitting all requests to discontinue a classified station, classified branch, or contractor-operated CPO to Headquarters. Requests for discontinuance must be accompanied by enough information to document the request. Clearly define the reasons and justification for the discontinuance. Evaluate and address the effect on employees and customers. Develop a questionnaire and send it to customers for additional information and comments or conduct a community meeting. A classified station, branch, or CPO discontinuance checklist must accompany a request for discontinuance. See Exhibit 721 for a sample discontinuance checklist. After Headquarters' approval is received, notify appropriate Postal Service officials and affected customers of the discontinuance.

7 Best Practices in Discontinuance Process

71 Best Practices by Step in the Process

711 Suspensions

The following must be accomplished:

- a. Provide sufficient valid reason to suspend.
- b. Provide sufficient documentation justifying suspension.
- c. For Post Offices, involve postmaster organizations.
- d. Notify and adequately explain reason for suspension to customers.
- e. Identify most likely recommended permanent service as temporary alternate service.
- f. Conduct timely investigations and follow-up. (A plan of action should be sent to the Headquarters Review Coordinator through the Vice President, Delivery and Retail Post Office Operations, within 90 days after the suspension occurs.)

The vice president, Delivery and Retail, must approve or disapprove the proposed discontinuance. No final action on a proposed discontinuance may be taken without the vice president's approval.

73 Name Changes

When discontinuance of a classified station, classified branch, or CPO involves a name change, make a written request to Address Management at Headquarters. Wait for a written response before continuing the discontinuance process. Submit a copy of the name change request and Address Management approval to the vice president, Delivery and Retail, with the written request for official discontinuance. See subchapter c.) For more information on Postal Service facility name changes g. Conduct and document a search for suitable alternate quarters, if applicable.

- h. Conduct and document a search for qualified personnel, if applicable.

712 Initial Investigation

The following must be accomplished:

- a. The District Manager or the Vice President, Delivery and Post Office Operations, must give authorization to study.
- b. Adequately investigate alternate services.
- c. Conduct and document search for suitable alternate quarters, if applicable.
- c. Provide sufficient reason or documentation to support discontinuance.

713 Questionnaires

The following must be accomplished:

- a. Provide reason for discontinuance or recommended alternate service in cover letter.

- b. Provide address for customer to send written comments in cover letter.
- d. Send surveys in a timely manner.
- e. Thoroughly complete analysis. (Customer concerns should be listed and paraphrased, with the number of customers expressing each concern and the Postal Service response. Concerns should be classified as postal or non-postal.)
- f. Adequately research and address customer comments. A response should be sent to each customer who submits a questionnaire, and the response should address specific customer concerns.

714 Community Meetings

The following must be accomplished:

- a. Use the community meeting in all discontinuance actions except as otherwise indicated by the Vice President, Delivery and Post Office Operations, or the Vice President, Area Operations.
- b. Conduct meetings in a timely manner.
- c. Select time and site to encourage customer participation.
- d. Give adequate notice to customers.
- e. Thoroughly record documentation and analysis of meeting.
- f. Present a full range of alternate service options, together with advantages and disadvantages.

715 Proposal

Do the following:

- a. Clearly state reason for discontinuance in Section I of the proposal.
- b. Document the record to support the proposal.
- c. Adequately answer customer concerns from questionnaires and community meetings.
- d. Verify existence of any interested offerors when a contractor-operated retail facility is recommended.
- e. Obtain prior authorization from the Vice President, Area Operations, before proposing ZIP Code elimination.
- f. Include information in the record about petitions and Congressional inquiries.
- g. Explain effect on all employees, including those with non-career status.
- h. Post proposal and invitation for comments concurrently in all affected facilities, including the facility under study (if not suspended), the proposed supervising facility, and the facilities most likely to serve a significant number of the delivery or retail customers of the facility under study.
- i. Post proposal and invitation for comments together for at least 60 days (always begin the count at day zero).
- j. Round-date-stamp proposal and invitation for comments on date of posting and date of removal.
- k. Make sure information in the proposal is consistent with PS Form 4920.
- l. Make comment forms and copies of proposal available for customers.
- m. Make official record available at all affected retail facilities.
- n. Thoroughly record analysis of comments.
- o. Respond to customer comments.
- p. Write or prepare revised proposal with information from proposal posting, customer comments on proposal, the community meeting dates, and customer comments submitted at the community meeting.

- q. Accurately state the number of businesses in the community (need to include small and in-home businesses operated from rural residences).
- r. Check with Facility Service Office (FSO) on historical value of building owned or leased by the Postal Service.

716 Official Record

The following must be accomplished:

- b. Inconsistencies, contradictions, and anomalies must be clarified in the record by a memorandum to the record.
- c. List docket and item numbers on each document.
- d. Enter documents in chronological order.
- e. Complete or review index for consistency with the entries.
- f. Include legible photocopies or both sides of two-sided documents.
- i. Provide current and complete PS Form 4920.
- j. Update documentation. (Example: The description of community omits or miscounts significant local establishments, such as schools, businesses, and churches, or the analysis of community postal needs omits or miscounts bulk mailing permits.)
- k. Certify record.
- l. District Manager must make transmittal to Headquarters.

Appendix A

Glossary of Terms

Administrative Office

A Post Office that has administrative control or responsibility of a ~~contract postal unit~~contractor-
operated retail facility or classified station~~Classified Station~~ or branch~~Branch~~.

Affirmed

An appeal decision in which the Postal RateRegulatory Commission (PRC) agrees with and approves
the Postal Service decision to discontinue. The PRC's final order and opinion must be posted for 30
days.

Appeal

After a final determination is posted, an ~~action~~action request for review of the final determination that is
filed by anyone opposing a closing or consolidation decision ~~persons served by the facility being~~
discontinued. The appeal must be filed with the Postal RateRegulatory Commission in Washington,
DC, within 30 days of the posting of the final determination. The ~~commission~~Commission then has up
to 120 days in which to consider the appeal and issue its ~~opinion~~decision.

Classified Branch

A ~~unit~~retail facility that is operated by Postal Service personnel ~~operated and is~~ under the
administration of an independent Post Office. A branch is located outside the corporate limits or city
carrier delivery area of the city or town in which the main Post Office is located. The branch name is
generally used in the last line of the address.

Classified Station

A ~~unit~~retail facility that is operated by Postal Service personnel ~~operated and is~~ under the
administration of an independent Post Office. A station is located within the corporate limits or city
carrier delivery area of the city or town in which the main Post Office is located. The name of the
station is generally not used as the city name in the last line of the address.

Closing

An action in which Post Office operations are permanently discontinued without providing a
replacement facility in the community. Replacement services are provided by a neighboring Post
Office, highway contract routedelivery service, rural delivery, or city delivery.

Cluster Box Unit (CBU)

A secure free-standing unit of individually locked mail compartments ~~that are~~ installed and maintained
by the Postal Service at no cost to the customer. These units are placed on the public right of way or
other locations adjacent to the existing Post Office carrier's line of travel. Parcel lockers may also be
installed for customer convenience.

Community

A general term that denotes a group of individuals, with ~~common~~common interests, living in a
particular area. These common interests may arise from social, business, religious, governmental,
scholastic, or recreational associations and may involve consideration of shared institutions, traditions,

and public services that help bind the people of the community together. Institutions, services, and associations do not always have clear centers or geographic boundaries. A community, therefore, is not necessarily formally organized or confined within corporate limits.

Community Post Office (CPO)

Contract post offices, usually located in small rural communities that provide service where a Postal Service facility has been discontinued or otherwise considered impractical. A CPO generally retains the name of the Post Office. A CPO is operated by a Postal Service-trained contractor who reports to an administrative Post Office.

Consolidation

An action that converts a Postal Service facility into a contracted CPO, classified station, contract station, or branch. The CPO contractor, station manager, or branch manager operated retail facility. The contractor reports to an administrative office.

Contract Branch Delivery Service (CDS)

A contract post office (CPO) that operates under the administration of an independent Post Office. The name of the branch is generally used in the last line of the address.

Contract Postal Unit (CPU)

A contract delivery route that provides mail transportation between Post Offices, or other designated points, where mail is received or dispatched. Box delivery, collection service, and other mail services may also be provided on these routes.

Contractor-Operated Retail Facility

A facility that provides selected postal retail services to the public according to a contract with the Postal Service. It is under the jurisdiction of the administrative Post Office (Handbook AS-707-E, Contracting for Contract Postal Units).

Contract Station

A contract post office (CPO) that operates under the administration of an independent Post Office. The name of the station is generally not used as the city name in the last line of the address.

Discontinuance

An action in which an independent Post Office, ~~classified station-branch~~ Classified Station, or ~~contracted community Post Office~~ Classified Branch is permanently closed or consolidated.

Docket Number

A number assigned to the proposal that is the ZIP Code of the office proposed for ~~closing~~ discontinuance or consolidation. The docket number must be on the top right corner of each page in the official record.

Duplicate Delivery

A situation in which a customer receives more than one type of delivery service (e.g., customer receives delivery by both rural delivery and a Post Office box.)

Emanating Office

~~A Post Office from which a rural route-highway contract route carrier originates.~~

Emergency Suspension

~~An action in which a district manager, Customer Service and Sales, District Manager suspends operations of any Post Office~~USPS-operated retail facility in his/her jurisdiction because an emergency or other condition requires such action. ~~Circumstances that may justify a suspension include, but are not limited to, a natural disaster, the termination of a lease when other suitable quarters are not available, the lack of qualified personnel to operate the office, severe health or safety hazard in the work environment, severe damage to or destruction of the office, and the lack of adequate measures to safeguard the office of its revenues.~~

Final Determination

~~A written decision that comes from~~approved by the vice president~~Vice President, Delivery and Retail~~Post Office Operations, to discontinue an independent Post Office, Classified Station, or Classified Branch. ~~The final determination is based on information in the official record, and must be publicly posted for at least 30 days.~~

Government Relations and Public Policy

~~The Postal Service organizational unit at Headquarters that investigates and responds to congressional inquiries.~~

Highway Contract Route (HCR)

~~A highway contract route that provides mail transportation between~~Independent Post Offices, or other designated points, where mail is received or dispatched. Box delivery, collection service, and other mail services may also be provided on these routes.

Incorporated Community

~~A community that has some type of local government.~~

Intermediate Office

~~A Post Office where a rural carrier-highway contract carrier stops to distribute mail. The emanating office has administrative responsibility for the route.~~

An organizational entity subordinate to a district with responsibility for customer services, local delivery, the receipt and dispatch of all classes of mail, and in some instances, processing and distribution of mail for other Post Offices in the surrounding geographic area.

Nonpersonnel Rural Unit (NPU)

~~A self-service unit that provides essential mail services, such as the collection and delivery of ordinary mail and sale of stamps. Services such as~~may include the sale of money orders~~Postal Money Orders and the acceptance and delivery of Certified, Insured Mail, Insurance, Registered Mail, Collect on Delivery (COD), Delivery Confirmation, Signature Confirmation, and (C/D) mail~~other special services. ~~These services are provided to customers of non-personnel units by rural non-city carriers at the time when they service their visit the units. Carriers are required to remain at the unit a minimum of 15 minutes each day their routes are scheduled to operate, to afford customers the services not otherwise available from the unit.~~

Official Record

~~A chronological file of all information that the district manager, Customer Service and Sales, District Manager considers in relation to the proposed discontinuance of a Post Office retail facility. No information or views submitted by customers may be excluded, whether or not it tends to support the proposal.~~

Parcel Locker

A compartment in or near a cluster box unit (CBU) that is used for the delivery of packages, large articles, or accumulated vacation hold mail too large to fit in a mail receptacle. The carrier provides a key for the customer at the time of delivery. The key is typically retained in the parcel locker upon receipt retrieval of the mail. This eliminates the need for customers to pick up take delivery of their mail at the Post Office.

Post Office Move

A total Post Office operation that moves locally from one building to another for the purpose of having more adequate quarters. Service to customers is the same and no address and ZIP Code changes are required. This action is not considered by visiting a closing and authorization is not required from the vice president, Delivery and Retail USPS-operated retail facility.

Postal Rate Regulatory Commission (PRC)

An independent government organization agency to which appeals out of Post Office discontinuance final determinations are sent. The PRC's address is 1333 H Street 901 New York Ave, NW, Suite 300 200, Washington, DC 20268-0001. An opinion by the PRC is rendered within 120 days of the appeal.

Preproposal**Postal Service-Operated Retail Facility**

An independent Post Office, Classified Station, or Classified Branch operated by the Postal Service.

Pre-Proposal Investigation

An initial review of the Post Office and retail facility and the community — along with questionnaires, community meetings, and other activities — that is conducted before the discontinuance proposal is written.

Proposal

A document that explains — both to higher Postal Service managers and to all persons served by the affected Post Office retail facilities — the nature and justification of the proposed change in service. The written proposal must address each of the following matters in separate sections: a. Responsiveness to Community Postal Service Needs, b. Effect on Community, c. Effect on Employees, d. Economic Savings, e. Other Factors, f. Summary, and g. Notice.

Remanded

An appeal decision from the Postal Rate Regulatory Commission that does not agree with the Postal Service's decision or process to discontinue a Post Office Postal Service-operated retail facility and that returns the matter to the Postal Service for further action.

Revised Proposal

A document that includes information relative to the original proposal to discontinue a Post Office retail facility, customer comments to the proposal with appropriate Postal Service responses, and any new information not included in the original proposal. A significant change to the original proposal requires reposting the proposal. The format is the same as that for the proposal.

Suitable Alternate Quarters

An available facility that meets the specific requirements of the Postal Service in order to continue Postal Service operations in a community. Criteria for an independent Post Office a Postal Service-operated retail facility vary from those of a ~~contract postal unit~~ contractor-operated retail facility.

Unincorporated

Community

A community that does not have any type of local government.

Appendix B

Forms Index

PS Form Number	Title	Reference
150	<i>Postmaster Workload Information</i>	Exhibit 134.62e; 222e; Exhibit 222e
3227	<i>Stamps by Mail</i>	Exhibit 252.23; Exhibit 335; Exhibit 336; Exhibit 352.1; Exhibit 432.31; Exhibit 613.3
3227R	<i>Stamp Purchase Order</i>	Exhibit 252.23; Exhibit 336; Exhibit 352.1; Exhibit 432.31
4003	<i>Official Rural Route Description</i>	222e
4003A	<i>Official Rural Route Description Continuation Sheet</i>	222e
4920	<i>Post Office Closing or Consolidation Proposal — Fact Sheet</i>	133.4; 133.61; 134.4; 134.63e; 145e; 146i; 221f; 222f; 341.1; 341.2; 411; Exhibit 133.34; Exhibit 134.62e; Exhibit 221f; Exhibit 341.2; Exhibit 422

Appendix B

References

Administrative Support Manual

412 — Military Post Offices, Establishment and Discontinuance

518.2 — Facility Planning, Community Contact

519.224 — Design and Construction, Plaques Honoring an Individual

Domestic Mail Manual

508.4 — Recipient Services, Post Office Box Service

Employee and Labor Relations Manual

354 — Assignment of Unassigned Employees

Postal Operations Manual

123 — Post Offices, Stations, Branches, Contract Postal Units, and Nonpersonnel Units

Handbook AS-353. Guide to Privacy, the Freedom of Information Act, and Records Management

United States Code

Title 39 USC 404 (d)

Attachment "A"

Postal Service-Operated Retail Facilities Discontinuance Guide

Handbook PO-101

May 2011

Transmittal Letter

- A. Introduction.** Handbook PO 101, *Postal Service-Operated Retail Facilities Discontinuance Guide*, serves as a tool for providing district Discontinuance Coordinators information on policies and procedures affecting investigation of the possible discontinuance of Postal Service-operated retail facilities. Through adherence to this handbook, the Postal Service™ will assess the viability of and customer access to retail facilities, ensuring that the Postal Service continues to provide cost effective universal service to all Americans.
- B. Explanation.** This handbook outlines the procedures applicable to the discontinuance process and emphasizes customer participation in such investigations. No change in law or Postal Service policy governing discontinuance of Post Offices has occurred, except that, as policy decision, the Postal Service now applies the notice and comment procedures for Post Office discontinuance investigations also to discontinuance of Classified Stations and Classified Branches. The purpose of this handbook is neither to encourage nor discourage discontinuance, but simply to explain how best field personnel can undertake the investigative process.
- C. Distribution.** This handbook is distributed to all appropriate Headquarters, area, district and local employees who are involved in the discontinuance process.
- **Online.** Handbook PO-101 is available on the Postal Service Intranet on the PolicyNet Web site at <http://blue.usps.gov/cpm> (click on *HBKs*).
 - **Additional Copies.** You may order printed copies from the Material Distribution Center (MDC) using the touch tone order entry (TTOE) system. Call 800-332-0317, option 2.
- Note: You must be registered to use TTOE. To register, call 800-332-0317, option 1, extension 2925, and follow the prompts to leave a message. Then, wait 48 hours after registering before you place your first order.
- D. Revisions.** We will issue any new or revised policies or procedures through *Postal Bulletin* articles.
- E. Rescissions.** Any previous applicable directive that is in conflict with this handbook is rescinded. The previous issue of Handbook PO-101 is obsolete.
- F. Comments.** Submit comments and questions about the content of this handbook in writing to:
- MANAGER
CUSTOMER SERVICE OPERATIONS
DELIVERY AND POST OFFICE OPERATIONS
US POSTAL SERVICE
475 L'ENFANT PLAZA SW ROOM 6800
WASHINGTON DC 20260-6800
- G. Effective Date.** This handbook is effective upon receipt.

Insert Signature

Dean J Granholm
Vice President
Delivery and Post Office Operations

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1 Introduction

11 Overview

111 Purpose

This handbook is designed to assist field personnel in undertaking a feasibility study, an investigation that may lead to the discontinuance of a Postal Service-operated retail facility that could be a Post Office™, Classified Station, or Classified Branch.

112 Scope

112.1 General

These guidelines apply to the Postal Service's consideration of whether an existing USPS-operated Post Office, Classified Station, or Classified Branch should be discontinued. This includes any study, proposal, or final determination to:

- replace a Postal Service-operated retail facility with a contractor-operated retail facility;
- combine one or more Postal Service-operated retail facilities; or
- discontinue a Postal Service-operated retail facility without providing a replacement facility.

The conversion of a Post Office into, or the replacement of a Post Office with, a Classified Station or Classified Branch is not a discontinuance action subject to this Handbook. A change in the management of a Post Office such that it is staffed only part-time by a postmaster, or not staffed at all by a postmaster but instead by another type of USPS employee, is not a discontinuance action subject to this section.

112.2 References

See appendix B for a list of references on the discontinuance process. This list is a guide to further resources.

12 Federal Law Regarding Post Office Discontinuances

121 Independent Post Offices

Under Title 39, *United States Code*, Section 404(d), any decision to close or consolidate a Post Office must be based on certain criteria. These include the effect on the community served; the effect on employees of the Post Office; compliance with government policy established by law that the Postal Service™ must provide a maximum degree of effective and regular postal services to rural areas, communities, and small towns where Post Offices are not self-sustaining; the economic savings to the Postal Service; and any other factors the Postal Service determines necessary. By means of a 1998 amendment, the Postal Service may not consider

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) compliance when deciding whether to close a Post Office. In addition, certain procedures apply to discontinuance actions:

- a. The public must be given notice of the Postal Service's intention to close or consolidate a Post Office at least 60 days prior to the proposed effective date of the closure or consolidation, to enable the persons served by a Post Office to evaluate the proposal and provide comments. As a matter of policy, the Postal Service extends this requirement to discontinuance actions of USPS-operated Classified Stations and Classified Branches.
- b. The final determination to close or consolidate a Post Office must be made in writing and must include findings covering all the required considerations after public comments are received and taken into account. As a matter of policy, the Postal Service extends this requirement to discontinuance actions of USPS-operated Classified Stations and Classified Branches.
- c. The written determination must be made available to the customers served by the office at least 60 days before the discontinuance takes effect. As a matter of policy, the Postal Service extends this requirement to discontinuance actions of USPS-operated Classified Stations and Classified Branches.
- d. Any customer served by an affected Post Office may appeal the decision to the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) within the first 30 days after the written determination is made available.
- e. The PRC may either affirm the determination of the Postal Service or return the matter for further consideration, but may not modify the determination.
- f. The PRC is required by title 39, *United States Code*, section 404(d)(5) to resolve the appeal no later than 120 days after receiving the appeal.

122 **Classified Stations and Branches**

As a matter of policy, the Postal Service applies certain provisions of this Handbook to discontinuance actions associated with USPS-operated Classified Stations and Classified Branches.

13 **Responsibilities**

131 **Vice President, Delivery and Post Office Operations**

The Vice President, Delivery and Post Office Operations (or designee), makes final determinations to discontinue independent Post Offices, Classified Stations, and Classified Branches. In addition, the Vice President, Delivery and Post Office Operations, may provide authorization to study a retail facility for possible discontinuance.

132 **District Manager**

The District Manager is responsible for overseeing the Post Office discontinuance feasibility studies within a district and provides approval before any such studies are initiated, unless approval has already been furnished by the Vice President, Delivery and Post Office Operations. Upon approval to study a Post Office, Classified Station, or Classified Branch for possible discontinuance, the District Manager may establish a District Review Team.

The District Manager must ensure that the Vice President, Area Operations, is notified of all discontinuance actions involving a Post Office, Classified Station, or Classified Branch.

In addition, the District Manager is responsible for reviewing the results of the feasibility study prior to providing approval/disapproval to post a formal proposal. Finally, the District Manager reviews the revised proposal for accuracy and completeness prior to its submission to the Vice President, Delivery and Post Office Operations, for review and final determination.

133 District Review Team

If established, the District Review Team usually includes the functional organizations listed in 133.1 at the district level. Each of these functional organizations plays a critical role in the discontinuance process. These functional organizations within the district are responsible for the development and coordination of any data collection, communications, analysis, or other action necessary to support a discontinuance study under their functional responsibility.

133.1 Designated Team Members

- a. Facility Service Office: Facility and lease data.
- b. Manager, Post Office Operations (MPOO): Operational data and impacts.
- c. Manager, Operations Programs Support: Delivery data and alternate delivery options.
- d. Manager, Finance: Development and coordination of financial data.
- e. Postmaster (for discontinuance of Post Offices, Classified Stations, or Classified Branches): Local knowledge.
- f. Discontinuance Coordinator: The Discontinuance Coordinator provides assistance and support to the District Review Team throughout the discontinuance process. The Discontinuance Coordinator is responsible for thoroughly reviewing official records and certifying their accuracy and compliance with federal law, Postal Service policy, and the instructions in this handbook.
- g. Manager, Marketing: Responsible for customer data and coordination of community meetings, retail and expanded access, permit mailers and data related to permit mailing options; responsible for coordinating and responding to all customer inquiries and concerns.
- h. Corporate Communications: Responsible for communication to media and employees.
- i. Human Resources: Labor issues and communications to employee and management organizations.
- j. Government Relations at Postal Headquarters and District Congressional liaison contact: Congressional, state, and local government involvement.

133.2 Discontinuance Coordinator

Discontinuance Coordinator has administrative and coordination responsibilities for the discontinuance activities, including:

- a. Coordinating and analyzing data collected to investigate possible discontinuance with appropriate district stakeholders.
- b. Making recommendations to the District Manager based on analytical results.
- c. Compiling the official record of documentation.
- d. Ensuring that the discontinuance investigation complies with federal law, Postal Service policy, and the instructions set forth in this handbook.
- e. Ensuring process steps are completed timely.

2 Feasibility Study

21 Decision to Study

211 Authorization

The first step in investigating possible discontinuance is an official decision to undertake a study. No feasibility study may begin without authorization by the District Manager or the Vice President, Delivery and Post Office Operations. The authorization must be documented and included in the official record.

Begin compilation of the official record as soon as a decision is made to initiate a discontinuance study.

212 Circumstances Prompting Decision to Study

212.1 Postmaster or Other Responsible Personnel Vacancy

A vacancy in the position of postmaster or that of other responsible personnel may lead to a decision to conduct a study.

212.2 Emergency Suspension

The cancellation of a lease or rental agreement when no suitable alternate quarters are available in the community, a fire or other natural disaster, severe health or safety hazards, a challenge to the sanctity of the mail, or similar reasons may lead to a decision to study (see 611).

212.3 Office Workload

Earned workload below the minimum established level for the lowest non-bargaining Executive and Administrative Schedule (EAS) employee grade may lead to a decision to study.

212.4 Insufficient Customer Demand

Insufficient customer demand, evidenced by declining or low volume, revenue, revenue units, local business activity, or local population trends, may lead to a decision to study.

212.5 Reasonable Alternate Access

The availability of reasonable alternate access to postal services for local customers may lead to a decision to study.

212.6 Special Circumstances

Special circumstances — such as the incorporation of two communities into one — may also warrant a decision to study. See chapter 6 or contact the Headquarters Review Coordinator for assistance.

213 Circumstances Insufficient to Justify a Discontinuance Study

In the absence of the factors identified in 212, the following do not constitute circumstances that justify initiation of a discontinuance study.

213.1 Building Modifications for the Handicapped

Any claim that the continued operation of a building without modification that facilitates access by handicapped persons warrants discontinuance is inconsistent with the Architectural Barriers Act (42 USC 4151 et seq.) and serves only to show that necessary modifications must be made that satisfy those requirements, or that a waiver must be received. As such, any claim of noncompliance does not, in and of itself, constitute justification to discontinue a retail facility.

213.2 Restroom Facilities

The absence of running water or restroom facilities may be considered in conjunction with other factors in the feasibility study. However, the absence of such facilities does not, in and of itself, constitute justification to discontinue a retail facility.

213.3 OSHA Requirements

The Postal Service may not consider compliance with Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 (29 USC 651 et seq.) in making a discontinuance determination.

213.4 Deficit

The Postal Service is precluded as a matter of law from discontinuing a small Post Office solely for operating at a deficit.

214 Time Frame for Plan of Action Decision (Emergency Suspension)

Within 90 days of an emergency suspension, a decision should be made to secure alternate quarters, take other necessary corrective action, or initiate a feasibility study.

22 Pre-proposal Investigation

221 Notifying Customers

After the authorization to study is approved by the District Manager or the Vice President, Delivery and Post Office Operations, responsible field personnel begin to distribute initial communications to employees, customers, and other stakeholders.

222 Initiating the Study

Responsible field personnel begin preparations for a feasibility study upon receiving authorization from the Vice President, Delivery and Post Office Operations or the District Manager. The Discontinuance Coordinator should coordinate the following activities:

- a. The Manager, Consumer & Industry Contact (Dist), confirms the P.O. Box address at which the district receives customer questionnaire responses, written comments and other customer or stakeholder input.
- b. The Discontinuance Coordinator obtains a list of affected delivery addresses for the studied retail facility from the district Address Management System manager. The Discontinuance Coordinator also prepares customer notifications to each affected delivery customer (as outlined in 24).
- c. The Facilities Service Office provides current lease information, copies of recent building inspections, the facility call history, and any request to locate alternate quarters, as applicable.
- d. The Postal Inspection Service provides the listing of vandalism cases reported by the IS and local law enforcement.
- e. The Manager, Finance, coordinates the collection of financial data.

- f. The Manager, Post Office Operations (MPOO), has responsibility for the completion of Form 4920, *Discontinuance Feasibility Study Survey*, and Form 150, *Postmaster Workload Information*, or *Station Manager WSC*. The MPOO is responsible for obtaining records of Form 25, *Trust Fund Account*, and Form 3609, *Record of Permit Imprint Mailings*, if applicable. The MPOO also has responsibility for determining the employee impact.
- g. The district Bulk Mail Entry Unit (BMEU) provides a listing of permit mailers from the *PostalOne!* system. Additionally, the district BMEU should identify any drop shipment customers that may be impacted by discontinuance.
- h. The Manager, Operations Programs Support (MOPS), provides delivery growth rates and begins investigating alternate delivery options, in accordance with procedures established by Headquarters.
- i. The Manager, Marketing, provides a map of the area showing the proximity of the installation under study to other installations and to expanded access points. The Manager, Marketing, also begins investigating alternate retail options, in accordance with procedures established by Headquarters.

223 Conducting an On-Site Investigation

The following should be performed by the Discontinuance Coordinator or by local employees acting under the direction of the Discontinuance Coordinator:

- a. Using a digital camera, photograph the interior and exterior of the retail facility. Photograph any structural defects, safety hazards, and security deficiencies. Take careful notes on the condition of the building. If there are defects and a current inspection is not received from the Facilities Service Office (FSO), request a building inspection from the FSO. Take or download photographs of the community, such as views of the community facing north, south, east, and west of the installation. Photograph or download digital photographs of any potential alternate quarters, potential contractor sites, or nonpersonnel unit sites.
- b. Explain discontinuance regulations to the Postmaster, OIC, or other staff responsible for the affected retail facility. Explain the discontinuance process and how to handle customer inquiries. Make it clear that no final decision has been made at this point in the investigation.
- c. Contact or visit retail establishments to determine whether potential interest exists for a contractor-operated retail facility (see 232.3).

23 Analyzing Service Alternatives

231 General

Rank possible replacement services in order of practicality, costs, and the need to maintain effective and regular service to the community. In some cases, a combination of services may prove beneficial to customers and the Postal Service. A discontinuance or consolidation may affect the P.O. Box fees for customers. If so, include such information in any subsequent proposal. See the *Domestic Mail Manual* and Notice 123 for information on P.O. Box fees. *It is imperative that effective, regular service be maintained, since the law requires the maintenance of a maximum degree of regular and effective service to rural areas.* If an office undergoes an emergency suspension, the temporary alternate service should be that most likely to become the permanent alternate service.

232 Types of Alternate Retail Services

232.1 Consolidation

A consolidation arises when a Postal Service-operated retail facility is replaced with a contractor-operated retail facility.

232.2 Prohibited Locations

Contractor-operated retail facilities may not be located in or directly connected to a room in which intoxicating beverages are sold for consumption on the premises.

232.3 Contractor-Operated Retail Facility

Visit potential sites to elicit interest among qualified offerors for a contractor-operated retail facility. A contractor-operated retail facility is usually located in an established business, such as a grocery store, and often adds to the financial base of the community. Many types of postal services can be provided through contractor-operated facilities. Permit mailings cannot be entered via contractor-operated facilities. Non-postal services may be made available at a contractor-operated retail facility. Hours of operation often exceed those in a Postal Service-operated retail facility. Before proposing a contractor-operated retail facility, be sure of interested offerors and that a reasonable offer can be expected. The economy of the area must be considered in determining a reasonable bid. When establishing a contractor-operated retail facility, refer to the Denver Category Management Center (CMC).

233 Types of Alternate Delivery Services

233.1 Discontinuance

A discontinuance involves ending operations at an independent Post Office, Classified Station, or Classified Branch. Normally, the ZIP Code for each address served by a discontinued retail facility is retained. A discontinuance does not require a change in ZIP Code unless ZIP Code elimination is approved by the Vice President, Area Operations. Do not make a request for ZIP Code elimination unless needed for logistics to provide efficient mail service. Resolve whether a ZIP Code will be eliminated *before* telling customers that their ZIP Code will change and *before* beginning the 60-day proposal posting period.

233.2 Rural and Contract Delivery Service

For rural and contract delivery service, evaluate the route workload and determine (1) whether any change in evaluation or overburden will exist, (2) optimum mode of delivery, whether to roadside mailboxes or cluster box units (CBUs) or both, or (3) whether mail theft or vandalism issues exist on the route. Customer addresses may change; however, the community name and ZIP Code are ordinarily retained in the address. Customers can obtain retail services only through a rural or contract delivery service carrier.

233.3 Rural Nonpersonnel Unit

In a nonpersonnel unit, the Postal Service leases space, offers retail services each delivery day, and may deliver to CBUs or P.O. Boxes. The carrier brings mail to the office, distributes mail into delivery receptacles, and provides retail services for a specified time. Retail services are available a minimum of 15 minutes each delivery day. The nonpersonnel unit provides a centralized location for customers to meet and allows the community to retain a retail outlet. Address changes are ordinarily not required. If space is leased in another business or in the community, this may provide customers with improved access to delivery and retail services. It is very important to discuss this option with the carrier and other delivery personnel.

24 Customer Questionnaires

241 Purpose

Questionnaires are used to gather additional information about a community, its postal customers and their access to delivery and retail services. This information helps the Postal Service to determine the service needs of the community. The information also helps in assessing the most efficient and economical way to provide those services.

242 Preparing the Questionnaire

242.1 Enclosures

242.11 Cover Letter

A cover letter must be included online or enclosed with each printed questionnaire that clearly explains the discontinuance process and why the Postal Service is investigating the possible discontinuance of a facility. The cover letter should also notify the customer of any possible change in delivery and retail services, and any changes to P.O. Box fees.

242.12 Questionnaire

The customer questionnaire containing the name of the affected retail facility and the customer's address should be mailed to all P.O. Box and carrier delivery customers of the affected facility. The mailing should include the cover letter, customer questionnaire, copy of the *Summary of Postal Service Retail Facility Change Regulations*, and a pre-addressed postage paid envelope for return of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire, customer letter, and *Summary of Postal Service Retail Facility Change Regulations* should be posted in the lobby of the affected retail facility with an indication that copies are available upon request.

242.13 Preparing the Questionnaire

The cover letter and questionnaire containing the name of affected retail facility and customer's address should be prepared to include the date the completed questionnaire should be returned. Additional cover letters and questionnaires should be prepared with the affected retail facility name and designated space for customer to complete their name and address.

The additional questionnaires are to be placed in the local installation for walk-in customers and for delivery customers requesting to complete more than one questionnaire per household.

242.14 Receipt of Customer Feedback

Customers should be provided a deadline, five to seven days from the day of receipt, to enter their feedback online or return the printed questionnaire. Customers should also be provided a phone number for the district Consumer & Industry Contact Office and the P.O. Box address designated for discontinuance communications. Written comments may be hand-delivered to the local postmaster, OIC, or other responsible personnel, who should forward such comments to the Manager, Consumer & Industry Contact.

The Manager, Consumer & Industry Contact, is responsible for answering customer questionnaires, as appropriate, and ensuring that the Discontinuance Coordinator is provided copies of all customer letters and responses, which become part of the official record. When appropriate, certain personally identifiable information, such as individual names, and residential addresses and telephone numbers, may be redacted from the publicly accessible copy of the record. See 42 for how to handle customer comments.

243 Analyzing Customer Questionnaires

After the response deadline expires, the Discontinuance Coordinator timely prepares a questionnaire analysis. Maintain copies of returned questionnaires and response letters for inclusion in the official record, including those submitted after the deadline. (Written customer comments submitted at any time, and responses, should always become part of the official record.)

244 Management's Recommendation

244.1 District Review

The Discontinuance Coordinator must thoroughly review the official record to ensure compliance with federal law, Postal Service policy, and the instructions in this handbook.

When the initial investigative data are compiled and analyzed along with the customer questionnaire results, the MPOO makes a recommendation to the District Manager whether to pursue the discontinuance and, if so, the preferred alternate service. The justification for discontinuance must be documented in the record.

244.2 Headquarters Preliminary Review

After the initial review and the MPOO's recommendation to proceed with study, the Headquarters Review Coordinator reviews the information in the record to ensure that appropriate justification and documentation are in accordance with federal law and Postal Service policy. If there are no issues or problems, the district Discontinuance Coordinator will be notified to proceed with the feasibility study.

244.3 Justification for Discontinuance

The justifications for proceeding with a discontinuance must relate to the criteria in 321.

244.4 Decision to Post Proposal

After the Headquarters Review Coordinator confirms that the review complies with federal law and Postal Service policy, a formal proposal to discontinue the facility is prepared and forwarded to the District Manager for review and concurrence before it is posted. See chapter 3 for further information on the proposal.

25 Community Meeting

251 General

A community meeting can be held anytime prior to the Final Determination unless otherwise authorized by the Vice President, Area Operations, or the Vice President, Delivery and Post Office Operations.

At the community meeting, customers should be provided with an explanation for the proposed change in service. State the advantages and disadvantages for customers and for the Postal Service (for example, tell customers whether their address will be affected and whether P.O. Box fees will change if they choose service at a neighboring retail facility). Make it clear that no final decision has been made. Do not argue or raise your voice with customers. Always tell them the truth. If the answer to a customer's question is not apparent, obtain the customer's name and address and respond in writing after the meeting. Make notes of customer concerns and responses for inclusion in the official record. However, do not tape the meeting, because this inhibits open discussion. Immediately terminate the meeting if it gets out of control.

251.1 Selecting Date and Location

The Marketing Manager should discuss the time and location of the community meeting with the Postmaster, OIC, or other responsible personnel. Be sure to schedule the meeting at a time that encourages customer participation, such as during an evening or weekend. Potential community locations include a community center, church meeting room, city hall, school, or the postal retail facility. Designate a set time for the meeting, but be flexible enough to extend the meeting if necessary to answer customer questions.

Dress appropriately for the community. If a second meeting is warranted, plan and schedule it according to the same guidelines as the initial meeting.

251.2 Notifying Customers

Notify customers of the community meeting date, time, and location at least five to seven days in advance. If you receive information that the time is inconvenient for most customers, reschedule the meeting at a more convenient time.

252 Preparing for the Meeting

Begin preparations for community meeting immediately upon the official decision to undertake a study. The District Manager should coordinate the following activities:

- a. The Discontinuance Coordinator prepares a briefing sheet and management presentation, and prepares copies of the briefing sheet for handout at the meeting.
- b. The Manager, Marketing, finalizes the meeting logistics.
- c. The Discontinuance Coordinator prepares sign-in sheets and cluster box unit (CBU) hand-outs, if applicable.
- d. The District Manager conducts a readiness teleconference five days prior to the meeting.

253 Conducting the Meeting

The Manager, Marketing, has the overall responsibility for the community meeting. The Discontinuance Coordinator should assist with coordinating the following activities:

- a. The Manager, Marketing, sets up the meeting location and required equipment.
- b. The Discontinuance Coordinator places the sign-in sheet near the entrance of the meeting room and encourages customers to sign in.
- c. The District Manager or MPOO conducts the Management Presentation and provides responses to customer questions.
- d. The Manager, Consumer & Industry Contact, with assistance of the Discontinuance Coordinator, has responsibility for collecting customer comments and management responses.

254 Analyzing the Meeting

After the meeting, categorize customer concerns as postal and non-postal. Indicate the number of customers expressing each type of concern. Also indicate the Postal Service response. Consumer & Industry Contact has responsibility for providing written responses to any customer questions that were unanswered at the meeting. A record of the customer inquiries and responses should be handled as in 26.

26 Customer Comment Letters

A written response must be sent to each customer comment. The response must address the individual concerns expressed by the customer. Consumer & Industry Contact should tailor core letters, as appropriate, to respond to customer comments.

261 Centralized Location

To simplify maintenance of a centralized channel for customers' written comments and questions, they should be directed, whenever possible, to a single P.O. Box address. If customer correspondence obviously related to the discontinuance is received elsewhere it should be forwarded to or deposited at the P.O. Box designated for the discontinuance study.

262 Customer Response Letters

The Manager, Consumer & Industry Contact, is responsible for customer response letters using established Headquarters procedures. The customer letter and each response must be provided to the Discontinuance Coordinator for inclusion in the official record. When appropriate, certain personally identifiable information, such as individual names or residential addresses/telephone numbers should be redacted from publicly accessible copies of the record. If a core response is not available, Consumer & Industry Contact requests assistance from the Discontinuance Coordinator to develop an appropriate response.

263 Excessive Volume of Comments

If the volume of correspondence received exceeds the ability to respond in a timely manner, the Manager, Consumer & Industry Contact, notifies the Discontinuance Coordinator who seeks and coordinates field support, with the assistance of the MPOO.

3 The Proposal

31 General

311 Discontinuance Coordinator Responsibilities

The Discontinuance Coordinator is responsible for overseeing the gathering and preservation of the official record containing all documentation used to assess any proposed change. This includes any internal and external communications related to the discontinuance. If the proposed action appears warranted, a formal proposal to discontinue the facility is prepared and forwarded to the District Manager for review and concurrence before it is posted.

311.1 Memorandum to the Record

If, at any time, discrepancies or inconsistencies appear in the record documentation, the Discontinuance Coordinator should explain and resolve the matter by preparing a written explanation for inclusion in the record (memorandum to the record). Any memorandum to the record must reflect the date responsive information was obtained as well as the date of the memorandum's inclusion in the official record.

311.2 Proposal Checklist

When investigation of the feasibility of a possible discontinuance reaches the stage where a formal proposal to discontinue an independent Post Office, Classified Station, or Classified Branch is prepared for posting, the Discontinuance Coordinator must thoroughly review the proposal and supporting record before the 60-day posting period. The Discontinuance Coordinator must complete a proposal checklist to certify that the review has been conducted and that all necessary investigation has been undertaken and documented in the official record.

311.3 Log of Post Office Discontinuance Actions

The Discontinuance Coordinator must maintain a log of discontinuance actions for each independent Post Office, Classified Station, or Classified Branch that is investigated for possible discontinuance. The log must include the name, title, and telephone number of the coordinator most familiar with the case. It must be current and available at all times. A copy of the log must be included in the official record.

312 Official Record

312.1 Review of Official Record

The Discontinuance Coordinator must thoroughly review the record to eliminate any inconsistencies, errors, or omissions. It may be necessary to add additional clarification or to correct deficiencies, update PS Form 4920 with current information, or re-post an incorrectly posted proposal. See 311.1 for information about explaining discrepancies or inconsistencies with a memorandum to the record. The Discontinuance Coordinator must validate and expressly enter into the record the log of discontinuance actions. This validation and entry certifies that the record is ready for review by the Vice President, Delivery and Post Office Operations, and, in the event of an appeal, that it is appropriate for review by the Office of General Counsel and the Postal Regulatory Commission. See 311.3 for information about the log of discontinuance actions.

312.2 Copies of Record Documents

The official record containing *original* documents or their electronic counterparts is kept at the district level. The Discontinuance Coordinator is responsible for updating the official record from the time it arrives at the district until the end of the discontinuance process. The final entry to the record is the *Postal Bulletin Retail Facility Change Announcement*. The original official record is filed in district archives. Other copies of the record may be destroyed at the discretion of the District Manager.

313 Archiving Official Record

313.1 Preparing to Archive Record

Before permanently closing the record to be filed in district archives, the Discontinuance Coordinator must review the record documentation from the time the record was transmitted to Headquarters for final determination to ensure that all subsequent occurrences are documented chronologically. (Documents filed in the official record must be entered chronologically.) Examples of required documents include:

- a. Final determination and round-date stamps of posting and removal dates in each location.
- b. Copy of the completed *Postal Bulletin Retail Facility Change Announcement* form.
- c. Appeal notices, pleadings, and decision (when appropriate).
- d. Copy of the instructions to the local address management office to update the Address Management System (AMS) report.
- e. Copy of the published *Postal Bulletin Retail Facility Changes Announcement*.

313.2 Archiving Record

In accordance with *Electronic Records and Information Management Systems (eRIMS)*, the complete archived electronic record must be kept for two years from the end of the calendar year in which the final decision is made. The record may be disposed of after that time at the discretion of the District Manager. Electronic copies of the record (see 312.2) must be kept at the district office for six years from the end of the calendar year in which the final decision is made.

32 Components of the Proposal

321 Description

The proposal must describe and analyze all details sufficiently that both customers and senior management understand the nature and cause of the proposed change in service and the details of the replacement service. The proposal must address each of the areas described in 321.1 through 321.7 below.

321.1 Responsiveness to Community Postal Needs

It is the policy of the government, as established by law, that the Postal Service provide a maximum degree of effective and regular postal services to rural areas, communities, and small towns where Post Offices are not self-sustaining. The proposal should compare and contrast postal services available before and after the proposed change; describe how the changes respond to the postal needs of the affected customers; and highlight particular aspects of customer service that might be more or less advantageous to respective customers. .

321.2 Effect on Community

The proposal must include an analysis of the effect the proposed discontinuance might have on the community served by the retail facility.

321.3 Effect on Employees

The proposal must summarize the possible effects of the change on the Postmaster and other employees of the installation considered for discontinuance. The District Manager must suggest measures to comply with personnel regulations. (See the *Employee and Labor Relations Manual*.)

321.4 Economic Savings

The proposal must include an analysis of the economic savings to the Postal Service from the proposed action, including the cost or savings expected from each major factor contributing to the overall estimate.

321.5 Other Factors

The proposal should include an analysis of other factors that the District Manager determines necessary for a complete evaluation of the proposed change, whether favorable or unfavorable. If not already addressed elsewhere, explain how unusual services furnished to customers, such as reading mail to illiterate or blind customers, or special accommodations for physically challenged customers, can be provided upon discontinuance.

321.6 Summary

The proposal must include a summary that explains why the proposed action is necessary and assesses how factors supporting the proposed change outweigh any negative factors. In taking competing considerations into account, the need to provide effective and regular service is paramount.

321.7 Notice

The proposal must include the following notice:

- (1) *Supporting Materials (all facility types)*. "Copies of all materials on which this proposal is based are available for public inspection at _____ during normal office hours."
- (2) *Proposal (facility not suspended)*. "This is a proposal. It is not a final determination to (close) (consolidate) this facility. If a final determination is made to close or consolidate this facility, after public comments on this proposal are received and taken into account, a notice of that final determination will be posted in this facility."
- (3) *Proposal (suspended facility)*. "This is a proposal. It is not a final determination to (close) (consolidate) this facility. If a final determination is made to (close) (consolidate) this facility, after public comments on this proposal are received and taken into account, a notice of that final determination will be posted in the (name of administrative office)."
- (4) *Appeal rights (Post Offices only, whether suspended or not suspended)*. "The final determination will contain instructions on how affected customers may appeal that decision to the Postal Regulatory Commission. Any such appeal must be received by the Commission within 30 days of the posting of the final determination."

33 Official Administrative Record

331 Description

The official record includes all information that the District Manager has considered, and the decision must stand on the record. No written information or views submitted by customers may be excluded, whether they support the proposal or not. The discontinuance process can be lengthy, and more than one Discontinuance Coordinator may be involved in the investigation. The official record must be updated and maintained in an accurate and timely manner to assist new coordinators and others who review record documentation.

332 Format

The record must be maintained in the following format:

- a. The record is assigned a docket number, which is the ZIP Code™ for the Post Office, Classified Station or Classified Branch studied for possible discontinuance.
- b. Upon inclusion in the record, each document is assigned a sequential number that becomes its item number. The docket number and item number are placed in the upper right corner of each document when entered into the record.
- c. A numeric rather than alphabetical numbering system is used. Page numbers can be assigned consecutively throughout the document and/or consecutively within each item. Page numbers should also be placed in the upper right corner of each page within every document, below the docket and item numbers.
- d. Items are filed in chronological order. As written communications are received in response to the public notice, invitation for comments or otherwise, each is included in the record (usually, but not necessarily, together with its written response).
- e. A chronological index is included that identifies each document by item number and the date entered into the record.
- f. The entire record is bound in a folder that opens from the side. A label bearing the installation name and docket number is displayed on the folder cover.

333 Content

These conditions apply to the content:

- a. Do not refer to individual customers by name in the index or proposal.
- c. Ensure that photocopies or scanned versions of documents in the record are legible, and that *both sides of two-sided documents are included*.
- d. Ensure that each statement in the proposal is supported evidence in the record.
- e. Include updated PS Form 4920 to reflect updated information when necessary. If operations in an office are suspended, copy the information that has not changed and update other data on the new PS Form 4920. Keep old PS Forms 4920 in their chronological place in the record.
- f. Review the record to ensure it is accurate and in compliance with federal law, Postal Service policy, and the instructions in this handbook.

334 Availability of Record to Public

A complete copy of the record must be available for public inspection during normal office hours at the installation under study for discontinuance or, if the installation has been temporarily suspended, at the installation providing alternative service, as well as any office likely to serve a significant number of customers of the office under study. The public inspection period must begin no later than the date when the proposal is posted and extends through the